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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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Thai leader Thaksin wins bigger mandate

Even PNP camps suffer from population boom

US ruling on Marcos money elates Imelda

KA AMOMES and Ka Jose are greeted by women comrades in the New People's Army after exchanging marriage vows.

Reds officiate first gay marriage in NPA

THE NEWLYWEDS and their "wedding cortege" with arms.

All is not lost, Joker tells martial law victims

Plan to oust Edong from opposition bloc bared

Pre-need firm chided for ads

The lion roars to flatten Manobo lands

SPECIAL REPORT

A MANOBO woman shows the rarely planted pineapples in a field that was once devoted to traditional root crops of the tribal community.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2005

WEATHER FORECAST

Oil firms told: Explain price hikes

By Abigail L. Ho

ENERGY Secretary Vincent Perez yesterday asked local oil companies to explain their decision to raise pump prices despite the declining prices of oil in the world market.

In a statement yesterday, Perez said all refiner Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. and independent players Eastern Petroleum Corp., Phoenix V and Unioil Petroleum Philippines Inc. would have to come up with suitable explanations for their actions.

Shell, Eastern, Phoenix V and Unioil yesterday raised the pump prices of diesel and kerosene by 30 centavos a liter and of unleaded gasoline by 40 centavos a liter. Shell also jacked up the price of its cooking gas by 40 centavos a kilo to P4.40 per 11 kg cylinder.

Caltex Philippines Inc. yesterday also announced that it would follow the lead of its competitors.

At 12:01 a.m. today, Caltex raised gasoline prices by 40 centavos a liter, diesel and kerosene prices by 30 centavos a liter, and LPG prices by 40 centavos per kg.

While he admitted that the price of crude still extended gainless week up in January vis-à-vis December, Perez said that the price of diesel based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) benchmark for refined petroleum products slightly decreased in January as compared with December.

MOPS-based diesel averaged $51.28 a barrel in January, shedding 7.1% cents from the December average of $51.33 a barrel.

"We want to know why they also raised the cost of diesel," he said.

Perez said that the oil firm should not only explain their actions to the Department of Energy but must so to the consuming public.

He also pointed out that the international contract price of liquefied petroleum gas in February remained the same as the January price at $365 per metric ton.

"In order to [have also an adjustment in LPG]" he said.

The energy chief called on consumers to exercise their power of choice, pointing out that there were still some oil firms that have not raised their pump prices.

NUJP proposes trauma centers for journalists

By Nelson P. Flores

THE NATIONAL Union of Journalists of the Philippines last week rolled for the establishment of trauma centers for journalists exposed to danger and hostile conditions while reporting the news.

Today Yaptinchay, NUJP president, said it was the responsibility of media owners to take care of journalists by providing them with trauma centers where they could seek help from professional counselors.

"Journalists who cover war and conflict are also traumatized," Yaptinchay said.

What makes the situation worse is that those exposed to more danger are the correspondents, not regular employees of media, she added.

"These correspondents should be given the same benefits as regular employees when covering harrowing assignments," Yaptinchay stressed.

She stressed that if proper steps were not taken by media owners, journalists would end up burdened by these traumatic experiences, as they become less professional in their coverage.

Meanwhile, the Brussels-based International Federation of Journalists yesterday expressed dismay over the killing of President Macapagal-Arroyo to more than's NUJP representatives to discuss the rising number of journalists killed in the Philippines.

Gerard Ninomas, IFJ representative and Sydney Harald reporter, said they were dismayed that Maguindanao unsolved first criminal meeting despite the gravity of the situation. He said he would file the appropriate report to the IFJ headquarters in Brussels within the next two weeks.

WPD official linked to ex-NBI agent

By Christian V. Esguerra

INVESTIGATORS are looking into the possible involvement of a Western Police District superintendent and Traffic Management Group personnel in the criminal activities of former agent Marin Soriano.

The information came from Soriano's former colleagues at the National Bureau of Investigation who are monitoring their own "short investigation" into his illegal activities.

A ranking NBI official yesterday said they were collecting evidence against Soriano so they won't be caught flat-footed in case NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco orders a separate investigation.

So far, the officer has identified a WPD senior lieutenant who allegedly served as Soriano's "padrino" or backer, as the latter's group "bulldog" activities.

The police officers allegedly provided the ex-agent with guns in his earlier of arresting and squeezing money from drug suspects.

"Soriano turned in him as soon as he was kicked out of the NBI and both of the agents named against him," the NBI official told the Inquirer.

Sought for comment, Director Ruben Bella yesterday said it was "unfair" to accuse the WPD officials since formal complaints have yet to be filed against Soriano's alleged accomplices.

Deputy, the police director for intelligence, heads the investigation in his capacity as chief of the Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response team, the group that arrested Soriano in an entrapment operation in Quezon City last Monday.

"The proper thing to do is to gather more physical and sub each of them about what they know about Soriano's criminal activities," he said in a phone interview. "Then we'll ask them to file a formal complaint. We hope to finish this in the coming days."

Besides "bulldog" activities he purportedly shared with the PNP superintendent, Soriano and his group were also into car theft, the NBI source said. This was where his contracts at the TMG allegedly step in.

"He needed his TMG friends as he used to get into the vehicles that his group had stolen," the NBI official explained.

Among the vehicles were those high rollers would "press" and eventually resold to hotshots upon their unsuspecting victims.

Strong RP quake stirs panic in neighboring Malaysia

THOUSANDS of people in Malaysia's Sabah state on Borneo island fled coastal areas for higher ground when officials warned of a possible tsunami after a strong earthquake hit Mindanao Saturday night, officials said Sunday.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology told the Inquirer that the quake had a magnitude of 6.9 on the Richter scale. There were no reports of casualties or damage. It shook houses in Davao City but caused no panic, as residents differ in the area said.

A Manila bulletin said the quake struck at 9:22 p.m. and was centered 237 km southwest of Sulu, in Sulu Sea in Sulu province. The tremor, which came from the sea at a depth of 309 km, lasted for seven minutes that caused no tsunami, meteorologist Imelda Ramos of Pagasa said.

The quake, however, prompted the Malaysian Fitno Monitor's Crisis and Disaster Center to issue "yellow-alert tsunami alert.

Center director Mohamad Hisab said parts of Sabah, especially the state capital Kota Kinabalu, Tawau and several coastal areas, felt the tremor.

Malaysian police urged locals to come near to evacuate coastal homes. Several tourists in hotels on Sabah's west coast immediately alerted their guests. Police were seen in many places calming the public after midnight as they ushered to keep mosques and other high ground for fear that a tsunami might strike.

Even after the alert was scaled down, some Sabahans were still jumpy. "We are not taking any chances," Mohamad Hisab, 44, told AFP as he made his way to the hills.

Various countries have been sensitive to reports of big earthquakes in the wake of last month's huge tremor in Indonesia which unleashed giant tsunami waves and killed about 200,000 people in southern Asia.

The Jakarta-based Pacific Tsunami Warning Center (PTWC) issues and General Sunrise states.

Residents of Davao cities said they noticed a mild shaking but there were no signs of damage.

"It was very deep, that's why we have not received any reports of damage or casualty," Phivolcs science research assistant Melvin Cahoy said over the phone.

"Unlikely, but we are still monitoring," said Antonio Claraz, operations officer at the Davao Office of Civil Defense, when asked if the quake could generate tsunamis. AFP

2 Abu Sayyaf suspects nabbed in Zamboanga

DIMEASACAO CITY—Two suspected members of the Abu Sayyaf bandit group were captured after a hard firefight with soldiers in a remote village in Sumisip Island here early Saturday morning.

Southern Command chief Lt. Gen. Alberto Braganza said military intelligence agents clashed with a group of bandits in the island.

Braganza identified the captured Abu Sayyaf members as Abdulla Umbrah and Rhel Umbrah. An M-16 assaulter rifle was recovered from the duo, he said.

He said the arrested bandits were still being interrogated.

Braganza said after the clash, the military intensified its operations against the fleeing bandits.

"They are fully armed," he said of the group that clashed with the soldiers.

Marines and Navy intelligence agents were approaching the suspected Abu Sayyaf hideout on Sumisip Island on Saturday when about 20 suspected rebels opened fire, sending the clash, marine spokesperson Capt. Natividad Abaca said.

Some of the other rebels may have been wounded because of blood stains found on their escape route, Abaca said in a statement.

Soldiers launched the raid after informants tipped them off about a planned rebel meeting on Sumisip Island, he said. Sumisip lies near the Zamboanga peninsula and Basilan island.

There were no casualties on the government side.

The Abu Sayyaf has been blamed for a rash of kidnappings targeting foreigners and for bomb attacks in recent years. *Julie S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau with AP, AFP reports*

SC purges 56 erring judges from judiciary

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE SUPREME Court sanctioned or kicked out from the judiciary 56 negligent and dishonest judges last year.

Associate Justice Artemio Panganiban told a conference on judicial excellence at the Manila Polytechnic Hotel that since democracy was restored in 1986, the number of inquiries pertained by the high tribunal has reached 5,000.

"Legally knowledgeable judges who have no regard for ethics are dangerous to society; they may turn out to be worse than the criminals they sentence to jail," Panganiban said. "They are the scum and the scourge of the judiciary."

Panganiban said that 56 judges were either reprimanded or dismissed outright from the judiciary in the eleven-way from many have risched from their post.

The erring judges were penalized for bias, dishonesty, misconduct, immorality, abuse of discretion, undue delay in rendering decisions, knowingly rendering judgments, dereliction of duty, negligence and conduct unbecoming of a judge, he said.

Panganiban urged erring judges to "transform old habits of laziness, ineptness and duplicity into ethical values of industry, competence, and honesty." He said the Canons of Judicial Ethics and the New Code of Judicial Conduct for the Philippine Judiciary must be "vigorously" followed.

A recent Social Weather Station survey had shown that corruption was still very much a problem in the judiciary.

However, the high court noted in a statement that there were still many judges that adhered to exemplary judicial conduct.

Last December, the court associated several judges during its 2004 Search for Outstanding Judges, Clerks of Court, and other Judicial officers.

The awardees included Makati Judge Silvino C. Abesia, newly-appointed Court of Appeals Justice Mario Lopez Guevarra Dilal, and Quezon City Judge Agustin S. Dizon.

For first level court judges, the awardees were: Judges Joyce V. Garcia-Fernandez of Manila, Ralph G. Lee of Quezon City and Stella F. Cortuche of Baguio City.

"The awardees significantly contributed to the public perception of the judiciary—its tenure of honesty, diligence, and avoiding impropriety and the appearance of impropriety in all activities—and for their resolute efforts in upholding judicial integrity and independence," the statement added.

Madrigals insist on option to buy lots

MEMBERS of the landed Madrigal clan have asked the Supreme Court to allow them to show evidence that the Ayala family gave them the option—not a right of first refusal—to buy their lots in Ayala Alabang, currently the cause of dispute between the two wealthy families.

In a three-page motion to submit, couple Lolita Madrigal-Marquez said her husband Delfin Marquez said they had letters written in 1990 from Ayala Corp. showing that the Ayalas granted them the right of first option to buy the four lots.

"The assailed letters clearly show that respondent intended to grant petitioners an 'option' and not a 'right of first refusal,'" the couple said.

They had earlier asked the high court to correct its previous ruling which they said deprived them of the right to buy the four lots.

The rift between members of the two clans began after the Marquez couple claimed that the Ayalas reneged on an agreement that allowed the Madrigals to buy four lots from the Ayala Corp. after these were sold to the Ayalas in 1981.

They claimed that under a memorandum of agreement with Don Enrique Zobel and Jose Antonio Zobel De Ayala of the Ayala Corp., they had the right to purchase the lots.

They said they should be allowed to buy the four developed lots totaling 3,045 square meters at 1984 prices of P658.55 per square meter or P1,249,640 instead of P6,000 per square meter or over P17 million which Ayala was asking them to pay.

The couple had asked the high court to peg the lots' price at 1984 prices.

But in November last year, the tribunal's Second Division upheld a Court of Appeals ruling that under the MOA, the Marquez couple only had the right of first refusal, not exception to buy the lots.

In their motion, the couple said that a letter dated March 13, 1990, from then Ayala Land president Francisco Licuanan to then counsel, lawyer Enrique Belo, showed that they had the right to buy the lots.

"Your client's first option to purchase four developed lots next to the Botanical Area at the prevailing market price still holds. However, the Licuanan to Sell for the entire phase has not yet been released and are, therefore, cannot even offer these lots for sale. Please be assured, however, that once the Licuanan to Sell is released, we will get in touch with you," Licuanan said in the letter. *Philip C. Tubeza*

Sale of SMC shares backed, rejected

PRE-SUBMITTATION Law makers yesterday supported as "timely and justified" Malacañang's decision to sell government shares in food and beverage giant San Miguel Corp.

In a joint statement, Lakas Rep. representatives Exequiel Javier (Antipolo) and Florencio Libanan (Eastern Samar) said the sale comes amidst a "bullish stock market, the sizzling performance of SMC and the need for revenues to fund the government's agenda."

But presidential adviser and party-list Rep. Rafael Mariano (Makabayan) cautioned the government to forego too fast with the disposition of the SMC shares.

Mariano reiterated his earlier recommendation to set up a small consortium to meet interested shall administer proceeds from the recovery of the coconut levy fund.

Up for sale is 27 percent of SMC shares which the country have been entrusted to have been acquired by SMC chair Ricardo "Danding" Cojuangco Jr. through the coconut levy collected during the term of his late associate, President Ferdinand Marcos.

President Rhinegold Arroyo said over the weekend that proceeds from the sale will be used to rehabilitate the coconut industry.

Aside from the 27 percent shares, the government is also putting on the auction block the shares held by the Government Service Insurance System and the Social Security System constituting more than 11 percent of total SMC shares.

"There is no assurance that small coconut farmers will directly benefit from the sale," Mariano said. "The rightful owners which are small coconut farmers should decide when and how to use the funds."

Mariano has been finalizing a proposed bill providing for the creation of a small coconut farmers trust fund and intends to file the bill soon.

Javier, vice chair of the House committee on ways and means, said the sale of all government holdings in the SMC will "restore the government privatization timeline prior to the winning bidder ends up controlling about 40 percent of the firm." *Cecilio Pedro*

P100M worth of lumber seized off Batangas

By Nancy Carvajal

AUTHORITIES seized a shipload of lumber worth an estimated P100 million off the coast of Isla Verde in west Batangas following a tip-off from the office of Gen. Ignacio Madrigal.

Madrigal yesterday led maritime security officers to the retired lumber-laden ship anchored off Sangley Point in Cavite City.

Madrigal told reporters that the information about the lumber cargo was provided by her office after concerned citizens called through hotline numbers to report the controversial shipment.

"I hope this campaign continues because we already got three illegal logging boat and now only in the mid-level," Madrigal said in an apparent dig at her successor, Environment Secretary Mike Defensor, who had recently apprehended seven trucks of Chinese lumber.

Department of Interior and Local Government Secretary Angelo Reyes joined Madrigal at the Navy base in Sangley Point.

Loaded inside lumber, M/V B and X One was on its way to the Pearl Harbor in Manila from Dapitan in Ilocos province when it was intercepted by the Philippine Navy off Isla Verde near the province of Batangas on Friday morning.

M/V B and X One captain Rubi Jimenez revealed that the boat was carrying 3,135 cubic meters of processed lumber in 2,000 bundles.

"We had a permit to transport and bring it to Pier 18," the captain of the vessel told the reporters.

He said all the shipping documents were submitted to the apprehending team of the Navy for verification. The documents, he said, were given to him by the lumber operator in Ilocos named Rita Hernando.

"The shipper's name was Luzon Mahogany Lumber Inc.," Jimenez said, when asked about the owner of the lumber shipment.

He also said that their other boat, M/V B and X Glow, which was carrying more than a thousand round logs from Villanueva, Misamis Oriental, was also intercepted when it was earlier but was released and is now docked at Pier 20.

"Maybe their papers had been cleared, that's why they were released," the captain said in Filipino.

Madrigal, upon learning that another boat got away, immediately ordered the Navy boat to go to Pier 20.

The Navy boat, however, did not proceed to that pier docked at the Philippine Navy headquarters along Roxas Boulevard.

No explanations were given why the group did not proceed to that area. Back on the other boat which Madrigal earlier said could have been owned by certain influential people who facilitated its speedy release.

Madrigal said she found out that the other boat was already turned over to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

"I am just wondering why the DENR was quick to respond and who could have tipped them off," Madrigal said.

She added that she found it strange that DENR employees were working on a Saturday and that they forfeited the boat when they were just supposed to seize the ship.

SEA ARREST Madrigal and Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes inspect P100-million worth of lumber in Sangley Point, Cavite City

Party-list group bucks lateral attrition law

By Philip C. Tubeza

[illegible]

A party-list group, representing the country's teachers, has asked the Supreme Court to void the Lateral Attrition Act of 2005, which provides financial rewards and incentives to maintain and reward officials to improve their collections.

In a 13-page petition, the Alabalas Guro party-list group asked the high tribunal to nullify the law for allegedly violating the equal protection clause of the 1987 Constitution since it does not provide teachers and other government employees with the same incentives.

"Teachers, tasked to provide quality education at all levels, equally deserve to be given rewards and incentives for excellent work. Plaques, trophies, and certificates of appreciation cannot fill the stomach of a hungry teacher," the group said.

"Neither can mere medals and citations satisfy the needs of policemen and soldiers," it added.

The party-list group said "no valid reason exists" why other government employees should not be given the "same opportunity to earn additional income" granted to employees of the Bureau of Customs and its [illegible] rates of internal revenue.

"Soldiers and policemen[,] maintain peace and order and safeguard society against lawless elements with their lives. Their duties are as vital as revenue collection," the Alabalas Guro said.

"Just like revenue collectors, policemen and soldiers deserve monetary rewards and incentives for excellent service," it added.

The group said the law also violated the constitutionally guaranteed security of tenure of OSB and BoC employees.

Under the law, BIR and BoC employees may be dismissed when their revenue collections fall short of the target "by at least" 7.5 percent. However, the law statutorily did not fix the revenue targets to be achieved, the group said.

"The Policy Board has been delegated to the President without sufficient standards. It would therefore be very easy for the President to fix an unrealistic and unobtainable target in order to dismiss BIR or BoC personnel," the group said.

"The law is unreasonable, oppressive, arbitrary abuse of power, and makes a mockery of the security of tenure of BIR and BoC employees," it added.

Palace backs deferment of barangay polls

MALACAÑANG is open to a proposal to allow mayors to hand pick barangay officials of their respective districts to hasten the implementation of pro-poor municipal projects.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye noted that this practice had been tried in the country when Malacañang adopted the cabinet shortly after the 1986 Edsa People Power revolution.

"Those who were acting then as officers in that pre-were given the right to appoint barangay captains," said Bunye in an interview with DZRH radio.

"At that time there was too much politics involved because all of those in power were members of the same party allied to the administration," Bunye said.

Bunye was reacting to a proposal by Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos to have barangay officials chosen by the city and municipal mayors to prevent outrage for the newly-trapped governments.

But Senate Minority leader Aquilino "Nene" Pimentel, Jr. (PDP-Laban) rejected the proposal because the there you treat us, senators have "an inborn play" to give administration candidates the edge in the 2007 senatorial, congressional and local elections.

Bunye said the main advantage of this scheme was the speed and success in implementing local government projects. "The programs that the incumbent mayors are quickly put in place because those who are tasked to implement them are his allies," Bunye said.

But Bunye stressed that giving mayors such powers to appoint who has the final barangays, such as perpetuating the power of one person or family in a city or municipality.

Malacañang is amenable on the postponement of the barangay elections scheduled this year to May 2006 to give the new set up for the government sense to settle the problems.

Bunye said the deferment would lead to savings of at least P3 billion and ease the election in barangays across the country.

The ruling Lakas in the House of Representatives has endorsed the proposal seeking to defer the election of the barangay polls to the second Monday of May 2006, when the government's financial problems would have been brought down to manageable levels. *GMA Cabanatuan, Jr.*

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Pinay maids in HK protest cut in minimum wage

HONG KONG—About 1,000 maids from the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand and Nepal marched through downtown Hong Kong on Sunday to protest a US$50 reduction in the minimum monthly salary for domestic helpers.

The demonstrators walked peacefully from an urban park to Hong Kong government headquarters wearing paper hats that said "Bring back $4,310"—a reference to their original minimum monthly salary level of 3,670 Hong Kong dollars (US$470).

The government slashed the maids' pay by HK$640 (US$82) to HK$3,270 (US$419) in 2003, in a move it said was necessary to weather Hong Kong's economic troubles at the time.

The maids say the cut undermines their ability to support families back home, where a small [illegible] pay...In Hong Kong standards...can translate into a big difference in living standards.

"It's a big impact for us. Four hundred dollars is a big amount that we can spend," said Irene Ramos, 37, a native of Mandaluyong.

"I send (her [amount]) for my grandchildren.... they are all students," said 68-year-old Stella Samuel of Angeles City, who has worked in Hong Kong for 22 years.

Organizers didn't have an immediate head count for Sunday's protest. Police said about 1,000 attended.

The maids have reportedly protested the wage cut and launched a lawsuit against it. The legal challenge failed but the maids are appealing.

Past demonstrators said the domestic workers will be persistent.

"We will not stop fighting for this," said Nelly Cuesta, a 29-year-old native of Iloilo.

As of the end of November, more than 238,000 foreigners worked as domestic helpers in Hong Kong. Most come from the Philippines, with smaller numbers from Indonesia, Thailand and Nepal. AP

ASIAN domestic helpers shout slogans during a protest in front of government offices in Hong Kong on Sunday AFP

'All Filipinos were victims'

908. THE many who were detained or tortured during the Marcos dictatorship, it was like being brutalized all over again.

That much could be gleaned from the reactions of victims of human rights abuses after a US appeals court decision put beyond their reach the $683 million of Marcos loot[ed] assets recovered by the Philippine government from secret bank accounts in Switzerland.

• Lorenzo Lozano, 44, of Batangas, Hilary jailed for four months in 1985, portrayed those s tragic moments: "Our rights as humans were really violated as we should really be compensated. I did not only suffer from the imprisonment. I am also forced to stop practicing my school."

"My brother, Clemente, who was trying to help some people, was also abducted in 1979 because he was mistakenly identified as an NPA (New People's Army) rebel). He hasn't been seen since."

• Maria Elisa Enriquez, 52, imprisoned from 1979 [illegible] years 2[illegible] and held until 1986, then leader of the human rights group Selda: "The Philippine government must make an accounting of the money for the victims if it is still intact. They deserve to receive their compensation. We demand that the government pay the victims the amount that belongs to them."

• Enriquez's sister, Liliosa Hilao, nineteen when she was abducted by the military in April 1971 and killed.

• Pepito Alvida, 74, a retired opposer of dictator Ferdinand Marcos in Bulacan, arrested in 1972, when he was a student, and tortured. He was 22 then. "Kil-ni-ipinaglaban. If the victims won't get compensation because of the money will go to the government, that's OK, because ... all Filipinos were victims."

A 'terrorist' decision

• Mariano Gutierrez, one of the students activists arrested with Alvida, was also tortured and classified as was released.

• Former Senator T. Monlupa, 66, of Isabela, Cagayan, Isabela and Philippine Constabulary camps as an illegal NPA. He said the US court decision showed how callous the US government was.

• Former Cotabato Governor, 58, also of Bilibig, detained for four months and tortured. He said the court decision was an insult to him and the Filipino people.

• Fr. Joe Dizon, an activist priest, detained and tortured: "The decision was stupid, ridiculous, terrorist and unjust."

Justice denied

• Reynaldo Intrinsico, 53, of Isabela, detained and tortured in 1972. Now the secretary of the provincial tourism council: "The ruling was grossly unfair. There was already a prior court ruling and it should be carried out."

• Abraham Gonzales sentenced in 1973. Now an official of the government Service Insurance System in Batangas: "The ruling denied the victims the justice they deserve."

Not end of world

• Lawyer Democrito Barcena, jailed for three months in 1972 and his newspapers run several for five years. Now president of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines-Cebu City chapter: "It does not mean that this is the end of the world for human rights claimants. We hope that the lead[illegible] in Congress will take serious efforts in having the compensation bill passed. Justice [illegible] is a matter of justice."

The compensation could serve as a lesson for "enabling system," he said.

• Lawyer Hal Intrinsico, detained for a year and 7 months: "[illegible] very painful to the victims and their heirs suffered torture and detention." Report by Jhon Isabelle F. Dacera, Marlon Ramos, Romulo G. Peña, Jasmin Arcaloa, Leo Bukot and Bobby Lobañas; *With Kathleen Lance Burgos; Cornel C. Fernandez and Nestor F. Burgos Jr., PhD Hiyas na Bumas*

THE LATE dictator's widow Imelda Marcos speaks to supporters during a gathering at Manila's Rizal Park. AFP

US ruling on Marcos money elates Imelda

From page A1

than would hit the Marcos assets.

Mrs. Marcos said she was "almost speechless" on hearing the news about the US appeals court verdict.

"Once again, the United States judicial system mocked," she said.

But all is not lost for the victims of human rights abuses. One story at right.)

Malacañang said the decision could not disrupt because it would push Congress to pass a pending bill allocating funds to get a share of the Marcos bounty which had been in a government bank.

"We will first push for new [illegible] measures, the budget will come second and we will add the compensation bill because we really need to do this, "Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said in an interview on DZRH radio.

"The human rights victims have waited a long time for this."

Bunye also said: "I hope we don't get derailed and that we finish all the ceremonies before we have lined up."

It has been more than a decade since the US federal jury in Honolulu awarded $1.2 billion in damages to the families of victims, summary killings and disappearances during the Marcos regime. With interest, the amount has grown to nearly $4 billion.

In the maze of lawsuits and legal appeals, the victims have yet seen a cent of that award to this day.

GMA commitment

Bunye said: "The President has already expressed the need to indemnify the human rights victims. The executive has already done its part in recommending an amount for them. We only need to have a law passed in Congress."

He recalled that President Macapagal-Arroyo had ordered the Department of Budget and Management to allocate P6 billion from the proceeds of the Marcos assets in the meantime.

"We have to amend the GMRB (Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program) Law because according to its original intention, any wealth recovered from the Marcos family would be used for CARP," he said.

Hope lingers

The Supreme Court declared in 2003 that the many years past of Marcos' alleged ill-gotten and hoarded riches in the government.

Sen. Joker Arroyo said here was still hope for the victims to get compensation because Congress was working on a law to indemnify them.

"All is not lost," Arroyo, who sponsored the compensation bill in the Senate, said in a statement.

The measure would allow the plaintiffs in the US class suit, as well as other victims of abuses, to file their claims before a board to be created.

$11 billion

Arroyo, in a phone interview, said the board would evaluate each claim and award monetary benefits "according to the gravity of the crime and suffering."

Under the measure, those entitled to the money are the people who suffered under martial law and died from the period of Sept. 21, 1972 (when martial law was imposed) to Feb. 2, 1986 (when he last President Marcos fled the country).

The bill proposed the setting aside of $11 billion for the compensation of the victims.

Barry Capeling, former lawyer of the claimant's group Selda, said he was not surprised by the US appeals court decision since, he had realized early on, "that it would be difficult for a judgment of a foreign court to be enforced here, especially if the area we're contending with is the Philippine government itself, who has received the money."

The victims could now just pin their hopes of monetary redress on the compensation bills pending before Congress, he said.

'Is money still intact?'

He noted that Philippine National Bank had allegedly turned over the Marcos money to the national treasury and that it was now "co-mingled with the general fund."

"It's worth checking if it's still there," Capeling said in an interview.

Party-list Rep. Loretta Ann Rosales (Akbayan), a victim herself during martial law, said the Marcos years, said the former administration had committed itself to support the compensation bill.

Rosales is chair of the House committee on human rights and is the principal sponsor of House Bill No. 3111, which seeks to provide at least P1.9 billion for all Marcos victims.

She said that House Majority leader Rep. Prospero Nograles (Cebu), Davao City) had pledged to pass the bill soon in line after Congress had finished the tax measures being sought by Malacañang.

Victory in defeat

"If they set aside the bills with the speed of an express train, they can do the same for the human rights victims," Rosales said.

A human victim, Mario Elisa Enriquez, who leads the rights groups Selda and Kampi-sion, says the US court decision as, mixed, a victory.

"There's no longer any obstacle in the way of President Macapagal-Arroyo's promise to compensate the human rights victims of martial law," Enriquez said.

With the litigation assets safely in the hands of the government, Enriquez said the government should now honor the state's moral obligation to compensate human rights victims ... as stated in the Constitution." With reports by Jhon Carlo Pablo and Deb Gutierrez

The Daily Gospel

Monday, February 7, 2005
5th Week in Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Gen 1:1-19
Gospel: Mk 6:53-56

Having crossed the lake, they came ashore at Gennesaret and moored there. As they were leaving the boat people immediately recognized him and ran throughout the surrounding district and began to bring the sick on stretchers wherever they heard he was. And wherever he came, in villages, towns or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and begged him to let them touch even the fringe of his cloak. And all who touched him were cured.

Commentary

Spirits and ghosts are here that encounter others human-kind. Herod can recognize him and associate him with John the Baptist whom he had beheaded. Others recognize him as the Messiah, the Son of God, the Holy One of God. Jesus is not a ghost. He is a human being who has come to bring us into union with God. He is the Word made flesh. He is the Son of God who has become one of us. He is the Messiah who has come to save us. He is the Holy One of God who has come to make us holy. He is the Son of God who has come to make us sons and daughters of God. He is the Word made flesh who has come to make us one with God. He is the Son of God who has come to make us one with God. He is the Son of God who has come to make us one with God.

Supreme Court Doctrines

[illegible] LAW FORCE. PRINCIPLE [illegible]—For what must stand as the law of the land is the decision rendered by this Court before the [illegible] case is brought to it for review. Such decision is the law of the land as of the date it was promulgated, and not as of the date the case was originally filed. The petitioners are also mistaken in their contention that the doctrine enunciated in Tijam v. Sibonghanoy, 23 SCRA 29 (1968) is applicable to the present case. In Tijam, the Court barred the appellant from questioning the jurisdiction of the lower court to which the case was originally filed, after participating in all stages of the case before the said court, including the filing of several motions for extension of time to file appellant's brief, and only after an adverse decision was rendered by the said court did appellant question its jurisdiction. The instant case is entirely different from Tijam. Here, petitioners have consistently questioned the jurisdiction of the Regional Trial Court of Quezon City, Branch 96, from the very beginning. They have not participated in all stages of the case before the said court, including the filing of several motions for extension of time to file their brief, and only after an adverse decision was rendered by the said court did they question its jurisdiction. The instant case is entirely different from Tijam. Here, petitioners have consistently questioned the jurisdiction of the Regional Trial Court of Quezon City, Branch 96, from the very beginning. They have not participated in all stages of the case before the said court, including the filing of several motions for extension of time to file their brief, and only after an adverse decision was rendered by the said court did they question its jurisdiction.

The WORLD

Ellen Lorenne B. Gueco

Sunnis demand timetable for US pullout

BAGHDAD—A week after Iraq's historic elections, leading Sunni officials demanded a troop withdrawal timetable to rejoin the political arena as insurgents kept up their attacks.

Interim Sunni Arab groups kept up their bloody campaign, killing at least 25 Iraqis and a US marine in a new wave of strikes. Scores have now been killed since the country's landmark elections on Jan. 30 which is expected to save the majority Shiite community violent power.

Iraqi authorities and the US military also stepped up the hunt for abducted Italian reporter Giuliana Sgrena, who was seized near a Baghdad mosque on Friday.

One group, which said it had Sgrena, gave Italy until Monday to withdraw its troops from Iraq, but Rahimi expressed doubts about the credibility of the claim.

The militant Ansar al-Sunna group, which is linked to al-Qaeda, said Saturday that it had executed seven Iraqi soldiers who were taken following an ambush west of Baghdad.

In a statement posted on its website, the group said "The divine rule executed seven mercenaries taken prisoner in violent combat with the valiant mujahideen in the Abu Ghraib region."

Iraqi security forces have borne the brunt of attacks over the past week. Four soldiers were killed by a bomb-strapped motorcycle in the southern Shiite-dominated city of Basra.

A tribal leader was killed near the restive Sunni city of Ramadi.

The Committee of Muslim Scholars, Iraq's leading Sunni religious authority, said Saturday that if a timetable for foreign troops to leave was announced it would urge insurgents to end the resistance bloodshed.

Addressing talks with UN special envoy Ashraf Qazi, the influential grouping of clerics explained a timetable was a condition for its participation in the post-electoral constitution-drafting process.

"We told him (Qazi) that we had reservations and that we would discuss them with the parties that boycotted the polls and would put forward a common stance," said spokesperson Omar Baghdi.

"These demands focus on reaching a consensus with all political parties on a withdrawal of foreign forces," he added. "Then, the country's citizens will tell (the resistance) 'No need to spill more blood'."

Many observers believe the constitution, which the new national assembly must draw up, will only command national support if the Sunni Arab elite that dominated previous governments, is drawn into the process.

Sixty-four-year-old Sgrena, who has been working for the communist daily Il Manifesto, was snatched after visiting a mosque where refugees have been encamped since the devastating US-led assault on Fallujah in November. The area has become a no-go-zone-no-longer zone for journalists.

Female reporters Florence Aubenas disappeared one month ago as she worked on the same story, while another Western reporter escaped a kidnap attempt in the same area 24 days ago. AFP

Swank, Foxx, 'Sideways' grab top US awards

LOS ANGELES—Actors Hilary Swank and Jamie Foxx, plus the offbeat comedy "Sideways," were big winners at the US Screen Actors Guild awards, which are considered an important signpost for the Oscars (due this month).

In a ceremony on Saturday "Sideways," a comedy about two middle-aged friends touring the vineyards of California, was voted outstanding cast performance for the work of its four leading actors, Thad Giamatti, Thomas Haden Church, Sandra Oh and Virginia Madsen.

The film, directed by Alexander Payne, is one of five nominated for best picture Oscar, along with "The Aviator" and "Million Dollar Baby."

The SAG ensemble award is considered the equivalent of the top Oscar prize, which is due to be awarded by the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences in the Kodak Theater in Los Angeles on Feb. 27.

The winners of the SAG ensemble award has gone on to garner best picture Oscar in four of the nine years in which the Screen Actors Guild has name-checked prizes in this category.

Actress Hilary Swank was awarded best actress for her role in "Million Dollar Baby" directed by Clint Eastwood, in which she portrays a woman who decides to become a professional boxer.

Future prospects are looking bright for the self-busy young actress, who also took home the best actress in a drama award at the Golden Globes awards on Jan. 16.

In it 2000, when she won an Oscar for "Boys Don't Cry," Swank faces stiff competition from a male senior actress, Annette Bening, who is in the running for best starring role in "Being Annette." Bening was nominated for an Oscar in 2000 for "American Beauty." Actor Jamie Foxx won best actor Saturday for his portrayal of the recently deceased musician Ray Charles, in the film "Ray," (sports star Foxx is also in for an Oscar, after he picked up the analogous award at the Golden Globes).

"The Aviator," which has 11 Oscar nominations including best picture, best director for Martin Scorsese, and best actor for Leonardo di Caprio, barely got onstage Saturday, winning only best supporting actress for Cate Blanchett for her portrayal of Katharine Hepburn.

Veteran actor Morgan Freeman won best supporting actor for his role in "Million Dollar Baby." AFP

Rescuers struggle to reach Afghan plane wreckage

KABUL—Rescue-led troops struggled on Saturday to reach the icy crash site of an Afghan passenger plane that shattered into a mountain peak three days ago with 104 people on board, an official said.

All on board are feared to have died on the 5,500 meter mountain that is blanketed in thick snow after days of bad weather.

Sixteen of troops had remained first mountain above the village of Band-e Ghaz where three helicopter pilots had earlier spotted the tail of the Boeing 737 and other debris strewn across the peak southeast of Kabul, the capital, a State spokesperson said.

"Ground troops are still trying and working to reach the crash site," Maj. Karen Tanot Van Rein said.

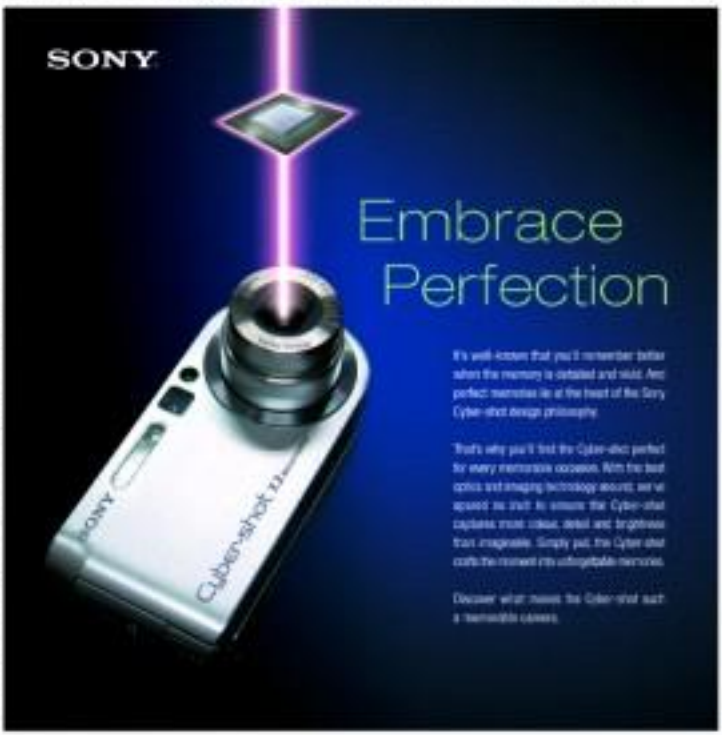
Bad weather and heavy snow were hampering rescue efforts, she said.

Most of the passengers were Afghans but also on board were nine Turks, four Americans, one Indian navy officer, two other Indian nationals, an Iranian and the eight crew, four of them Russians.

The plane, operated by private Afghan airline Kam Air, had been flying to Kabul on Thursday from the western city of Herat, a busy route for Afghan businessmen and foreign aid workers returning to the capital.

But a snow storm prevented the plane from landing and it disappeared off radar screens three minutes later.

Contact report is on a high plane surrounded by mountains forcing pilots to do a sharp turn immediately before landing even in good conditions. It also lacks electronic equipment to guide pilots trying to land in bad weather. Reuters



SPORTS

E-mail: sr_sports@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Teddyboy S. Melendres

Phone Pals down Kings, knot series

SAN MODESTO (Answer Column)

7:30 p.m.—NB 'N'Sol vs Almeda Textile (Best-o-seven series)

By Jun Mendoza

TALK 'N Text simply watched Ramon Guiebre self-destruct late night and cruised up matters to the Grey Moncher PBA Philippine Cup Finals with a come-from-behind 90-85 win before a sellout crowd at the Araneta Coliseum.

Willie Miller and Yancy De Ocampo struck on two nifty passes by Jimmy Alapag that highlighted a 10-2 climax the outer run as the Phone Pals end the best-of-seven series at 2-2.

Miller canned a three-pointer and the 6-foot-9 De Ocampo laid up off Bernal dubbed as the Phone Pals overhauled an 11-point deficit to take the lead for good at 87-83 with less than a minute to play.

Mark Caguioa shot a series-high 42 points but the Kings suddenly fell flat in the clutch, missing their last three attempts from the field and committing a couple of turnovers.

And Jeff Hrbek was an eyesore on the free throw line as the Most Valuable Player of the conference Bubbacha had back-to-doubles, including a pair that was followed by Miller's killer triple.

"Everyone on the team was our goal," said Talk 'N Text coach Joel Banal, who received the perfect gift from the Phone Pals on his 47th birthday.

"Game 1 is almost the finale of the championship. Whoever wins Game 2 has an advantage for the rest of the series," he added.

Miller turned in his team-high 20 points in the second half while Alapag and Mark Telan added 14 points each to offset Caguioa's hot night.

Hrbek finished with 16 points and 16 rebounds in an almost no-relief job for the Kings, who dominated the Phone Pals off the boards, 64-39, but committed 34 turnovers as against Talk 'N Text's eight.

Giuchos, which led by 77-66 early in the last quarter, also blew 1-2 of 33 free throws overall.

Caguioa hit his three-pointer out of eight attempts and sawed 22 points alone in the first half to compensate for an anemic performance in Game 3.

"Willie Miller] embarrassed me in that game and I don't want him to do it again," said Caguioa.

The scores:

TALK 'N TEXT (90)—Hrbek 16, Alapag 14, Pinto 14, Miller 12, De Ocampo 11, Asaytono 7, Bernal 6, Cabagnot 5, Salenga 2, Yeng 0, Ilagan 0.

GINEBRA (85)—Caguioa 42, Mark 12, Dimaunahan 9, Ayaay 8, Tanuan 6, Cortez 6, Reyes 4, Villanueva 3, Andaya 2, Wilson 2.

Quarters: 18-20, 37-42, 63-59, 85-90.

More PBA stories on A26

SPORTS TV

Compiled by L. Pangalian

AMERICAN FOOTBALL: Super Bowl XXXIX (7 a.m. [+0:30 p.m.]; ESPN and Sports Plus—Find out if the New England Patriots can clinch their third Super Bowl title or if the Philadelphia Eagles win their historic first crown.

BASKETBALL: NBA—Clippers vs Rivers; 8:30 p.m. [+9 p.m.]; Solar Sports - LA's other team travels to the City of Brotherly Love.

US NCAA—Pittsburgh vs West Virginia; 12 noon [+1]; Notre Dame vs Syracuse; 2 p.m. [+3]; ESPN - Take another look at these Big East encounters. Schedules subject to change without prior notice.

Tigresses storm past PSC rivals

By Manuel R. Castillo

VALENZUELA in the latter part of the eliminations, Senior Tigresses came up with a statement game for Philippine Sports Commission yesterday and barged into the 9-nods of the Shakey's V-League after a 25-16, 25-19, 25-19 victory that's one-half of satisfaction.

"My players simply showed who they really are," said Santo Tomas coach Ingrid Sia. Manila after storming the Tigresses to scattered straight championship series appearance with a 2-0 sweep of the Lady Jaguars.

Santo Tomas is in the finals in all of the two tournaments of this fledgling league, getting the goods from Mary Jean Balse this time after Fenemina Pimentel was held to check.

The Tigresses humbled the Lady Laguards for the fourth straight time, but none as quick and easy as this one fashioned on to just zero-in from Sellers' set witnessed crowd at the Hall Colesium.

Balse, the first conference MVP, scattered 20 points, 12 of them coming off kills as Pimentel, one of two reinforcements for 1SU along with Nadine de Leon, struggled with only 13.

PSC coach Jim Ibanez had opportunity expressed his preferences to meet the Tigresses in the Final Four, citing the fact that he snatched up until sixth berth's bonus.

Their 3rd three games, counting Game 3 of the series, all seem the full five-set route, and many of those who watched yesterday sensed a PSC unrelenting.

They were disappointed.

The Tigresses broke out of the gates hard and did not give the Lady Jaguars the leeway as De Leon and Pimentel established for another seven points off blocks.

Only Amelia Gumaro finished in double digits for the Laguards with 13.

Santo Tomas will await a Finals for other jamar turned the tables on the highly favored La Salle Lady Archers, 14-24, 22-25, 25-19, 25-23, 15-11, in the second game.

The Lady Knights rallied from two sets down, as their defense held and their receptors clicked to extend their form of sheer semifinal series to a thrilling game at 4 pots twice raw.

Cherry Rose Mantaspay scored all but one of her 14 points on kills and she got solid support on the offensive end, especially in the final three sets as Letrist went for the first time in four games ever to fade the tournament.

HANGIN' da Gramps and Rong Ramos (right) of Talk 'N Text thwart an onslaught try by Ginebra's Andy Seigle. The Phone Pals won, 93-85, to tie the PBA Philippine Cup title series at 2-all.

Menk grabs conference player plum

By Jane Navarro

WHEN somebody wins the player of the conference award, the performance usually takes a dip during the game when the announcement is made.

Not so Eric Menk as Barangay Ginebra's storm of strength soared to play even further after walking away with the Most Valuable PBA Philippine Cup player of the conference award yesterday.

"I knew it wouldn't affect anything that I will do tonight (Game 4)," said the 6-foot-9, muscle-bound Menk after capturing his third career plaque of the conference accolade.

"I will just play my usual game and prevent it from going into my head," added Menk, offering the award to his teammates, coaching staff, management, Ginebra coaching staff and those multitude of fans.

Menk, who also won the award in the Fiesta Cup last conference, had accumulated a total of 3,138 statistical points based on statistics and votes coming from the media, players and a three-man league committee.

"Individual awards just reflect the team's success," said Menk, stressing that without teammates he wouldn't have earned the recognition anyway.

Menk, who led the statistics department with 430 points, was the runaway choice of the media (1,200 points) and the four-man committee composed of representatives from the Philippine Sportswriters Association, PCSO press photographers and Gilas.

Talk 'N Text's Willie Miller, a bit second after compiling 982 statistical points, got the nod of the players with 614 votes over Menk's 323 but failed to convince the media and the four-man committee.

"I'm thankful for the award but I'll be happier if we win the title," said Miller. "We got settled tonight in Game 3 and hopefully we win it tonight (Game 4) so we'll be in great position to win the championship."

Repairs on, sorry for the convenience

BARE EYE

Rycab Trinidad

THE PBA, through embattled Commissioner Noli Eala, had hoisted Tanduay from rejoining the Talk 'N Text team in the current championship.

It is doing, the PBA itself had to go through extensive pressure.

It had come to a point where Talk 'N Text nearly bolted the league.

***

That was hardly convincing.

Except maybe for the Gilas Pilipinas which had to capitalize on the fortunes of Game 1 to gain initial edge in the best-of-seven crown-series.

Eala himself had to visibly suffer silence he indeed is the czar of Tanduay.

Of course, a lot of people were simply surprised Tanduay should've not been allowed to rejoin the team, thanks to at the start of the title chase(s).

The controversy had been fueled by findings from a former police chief Tanduay had used/rule for the purpose to legal tackle for $500 to the PBA.

The BOI itself had loaned in deportation cases against Tanduay on the Amazin Findings.

***

Oh, but, all told, it's not that easy.

There apparently were some legal issues stuck in the case Tanduay taking.

It not, why was the Talk 'N Text franchise able to secure an injunction from a Quezon City court and even had the gall to field Tanduay in Game 1 of the championship series?

The event was definitely not making a bad of itself in demanding a hot, **legit chaser for Tanduay.**

Anyway, when push comes to shove, Commissioner Eala stood on league rules and regulations to soundly rule once Tanduay's favor.

He surely got a unanimous backing from the PBA Board to forbid the Talk 'N Text stanza at the start of the **championship.**

As a reward for his bold stand, the Chooker Talk 'N Text Title series has also been stunning record rewards as the thig[h] hero.

***

But, as we hinted for Game 4 of the series, it could not be said that everybody was applauding Eala.

The PBA itself had every close to being shadowed by the Eala ruling on Tanduay.

In fact, Talk 'N Text has vowed to pursue its contempt case filed against the intrepid PBA commissioner long after the current championship fracas.

Yet. This is not the end of woes for Commissioner Eala.

Neither is it the end of the light for Barangay Ginebra and for Japeth Aguilar.

Eala indeed appeared to have gained the upper hand moreover by

Japeth's ejection for succeeding to what's urgent and convenient, if not perfect by legal.

So Noli's a Final manager, Commissioner Noli Eala must work doubly hard to put up proper safeguards against disorder.

In short, he must start implementing reports, mainly in the line-and-order of Chairman Erick Arroyo.

The days are now to hang up the sign outside the PBA office:

Repairs going on, sorry for the inconvenience.

PBA Jakarta-bound next month

A PARADISE for tournaments, the Philippine Basketball Association is set to embark on another travelog in the latter half of the league's 30th season.

For the first time since 1975, Asia's first play-for-pay cage loop will bring its games to at least 2nd provincial destinations and cities apart from a pair of overseas stanchers being studied to unveil out the PBA's reach to Asia abroad.

"I'm proud to announce that the board has officially approved the first international game of the PBA on top of the 24 provincial games already scheduled," said league commissioner Noli Eala.

Jakarta, Indonesia, has agreed to host the PBA's first-ever overseas match pitting the Shell Turbo Chargers and the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals on March 6, just four days after the start of the Invitational Conference.

Eala said the Shell-Talk 'N Text game is the result of a tie-up between the pro league and the Indonesian Basketball League, which has been eyeing to replicate the success of the PBA.

"But it will not stop there. We are also planning to hold games in Hong Kong and in the Middle East to cater to Filipinos working overseas," said Eala.

Hong Kong action which the PBA failed to reach in the past will be a top of its priorities and still make up most of the 24-out-of-town stanchers the league is mapping out.

"Of course, security is a primary concern in these areas, especially in Mindanao," said Eala, adding that provincial games in Davao will offer double-headers.

But only that. PBA provincial games will be now be held twice a week on Thursdays and Saturdays to give way for the national team, which will hold its practice sessions on Mondays.

Team officials of the 10 PBA ballclubs had agreed to make every Monday of the week as "RP team day" to help the national squad reach its goal of reclaiming its once lofty status in the Asian cage scene.

The pro league had recently signed a four-year agreement with the Basketball Association of the Philippines to form and host the national team in the hope of making it in the Olympic basketball competition in the Beijing Olympics in 2008. — Jane Navarro

Pope vows to pursue mission despite health crisis

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ROMAN CITY—Pope John Paul II, determined to show he is recovering from his latest health crisis, appeared in an open hospital window Sunday and vowed to continue his mission despite his age and mounting medical troubles.

It was the world's first public glimpse of John Paul since his hospitalization.

In a message read out by an archbishop, the 84-year-old Pope—looking tested and shot—gave thanks for the prayers and affection he has received since he was rushed to Rome's Gemelli Polyclinic last Tuesday with breathing trouble brought on by the flu.

On St. Peter's Square, where scores of thousand pilgrims and Romans gathered to see the Pope-in-first-point video screens, cheers went up as his image filled the screens.

"Also in this hospital, in the middle of these very days in which to whom my affectionate thoughts go out, I can continue to serve the church and the entire humanity," the Pope said.

"Today I speak to you from the Agostino Gemelli Polyclinic where I have been for a few days, being helped with loving care by doctors, nurses and health workers whom I thank from my heart," he said.

"May the expression of my gratitude for the sincere and heartfelt affection reach all of you, dear brothers and sisters, and to all those in every part of the world who are close to me, something which during these days I felt in a particularly intense way," he said.

Police tightened security around the hospital, posting snipers on the roof over the Pope's 10th floor suite as officials checked trash bins and patrolled with leash-sniffing dogs.

Hospital workers watched with teary eyes as the Pope sat quietly while his message was read. Then, over his blessing, he thanked those who had prayed for his recovery.

The Pope's message also spoke out anew against abortion—urging people to "treat as the life that children who are not yet born silently cry out for."

"So many children, who are victims, our families for various reasons, are asking for it so that they can find a home that will accept them through adoption and temporary care," the Pope said.

"To all and each of you I reserve you of my gratitude, which is transformed into a constant invocation of the Lord according to your intentions so also for the needs of the church and the good issues of the world," he said. AP

THE HANDS of a nun from the church St. Vincent De Paul are clasped in a prayer for the health of Pope John Paul II at the holy shrine in Knock, Republic of Ireland, Feb. 1. AP

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More seafarers killed in pirate attacks in 2004

JAKARTA, Indonesia—The number of seafarers killed by pirates surged last year, even though the overall incidence of armed robbery on the high seas fell, an international watchdog said in its annual report on Monday.

Thirty-seven sailors killed in attacks, mainly in Nigeria and in the busy Malacca Strait separating Indonesia from Malaysia, the Piracy Reporting Center of the International Maritime Bureau said.

The figure represented a significant rise on 2003, when 21 seafarers were killed.

Nigeria had the most deadly waters, with 21 seafarers killed while four people were killed in the Malacca Strait, the Malaysian-based center said.

Piracy-hit attacks on passenger and piracy attacks declined to 325 from 445 in 2003, but violence against seafarers "continues and remains at high levels," the report said.

"Although the decline in the number of attacks is to be welcomed, there is concern that in some key hot spots the situation has deteriorated," said Capt. Pottengal Mukundan, director of the International Maritime Bureau.

The arrest and hijackings of tugs and barges and kidnapping of crews continued to increase in Indonesian waters, in the months to Malacca Strait and off Haiti's coast. AFP

Rooster year seen not as disastrous as Monkey

By Helen Lai

HONG KONG—The Year of the Rooster begins this week and Chinese fortune tellers predict it won't be as disastrous as the past Year of the Monkey but some are looking for more explosions, earthquakes and even tsunamis.

"The year to control wood' be as turbulent and hostile as 2004," said Raymond Ip, a Hong Kong master of feng shui, the ancient art of harnessing your fortune by finding the proper position for things.

The general, it's a year of peace talks, more compromises and more negotiations, in the Middle East, we look forward to a more peaceful time," he said.

In the world Our Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler died and World War II ended in the bloodiest year of 1945.

The start of the Year of the Rooster will be celebrated Sunday, day by ethnic Chinese—about one-fifth of the world's population. The holiday on the Lunar New Year calendar is an feature in the Chinese-speaking world as Christmas is in many Western countries.

Also Ip, a famous Hong Kong fengs shui master who claims to decode pop stars Faye Wong and former flame girl Michelle Reis, said that "2005 is less problematic but is still a year of earthquakes."

Some of the biggest quakes happened during the rooster years, including a 9.1 magnitude monster that jolted Alaska in 1957, triggering a volcanic eruption.

In the same year, a global influenza pandemic killed more than a million people.

Tan Soong, a feng shui expert in Singapore, predicted an ongoing conflict in North and South Korea and said the southernmost part of Iraq will pose problems for the country.

Osama bin Laden—born under the sign of the rooster—will continue to be elude capture, but he's more vulnerable to backlashes in the year of his own astrological sign, Lo said.

"We expect some violence against terrorists in 2005," he said.

Lo said many astrologers accurately predicted that American president Republican George W. Bush, but they also told The Associated Press that Bin Laden would succeed.

It was the general opinion that the Year of the Rooster would be a time of tumult. Indeed it was. Violence continued in Iraq, a terrorist train bombing killed 191 in Madrid, Spain, and a quiet tsunami killed tens of thousands in 11 southern ocean-rim countries.

Soothsayers say the Year of the Rooster will be a good time for work and projects in business—and the world economy in general.

Malaysian feng shui consultant Datuk Seri Michael Tay predicted a year for the corporate sector, saying industries related to wood, metal and earth—such as paper, timber and oil palm businesses—would enjoy a boost.

Tay also predicted business might be so busy that they won't have time to "go home and eat," said Tay, who heads the kinetoric of Tai Studies in Kuala Lumpur.

The year will also bode well for glamorous industries, such as showbiz, advertising and cosmetics.

"The rooster symbolizes the element of gold, which represents fame and appearances," Lo said.

Famous celebrity roosters include Hollywood stars Leonardo DiCaprio and Michelle Pfeiffer, the late Jamaican reggae singer Bob Marley, British songwriter Sir Clapton, tennis star Andy Roddick and the late Nobel prize-winning author William Faulkner.

But Lo warned of a proliferation of marital problems, love affairs and sex scandals, especially for couples who have dashing signs, such as rabbits and roosters. AP

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Togo President Eyadema dies of heart attack

PHOTO/AP

LOME, Togo—Togo President Gnassingbe Eyadema, whose 38-year repressive reign over his tiny nation ended only with his death in Africa's longest-ruling leader died of what aides said was a heart attack Saturday, and the military immediately named his son as his successor.

Worldwide, only Cuba's Fidel Castro has held power longer.

Eyadema, 69, who claimed sole control in 1967 after ruling in what was sub-Saharan Africa's first post-colonial coup four years earlier, suffered a heart attack in his southwestern hometown of Pya early Saturday, officials said.

Togo said Eyadema died on his way to Europe for treatment, but Israel's Foreign Ministry said the Togolese leader actually had been on his way to that country when he died and had received medical care before.

Within hours, Togo's military high command declared Eyadema's 37-year-old son, Faure Gnassingbe, was the West African nation's new president.

While the constitution calls for that power to go to the speaker of parliament, Togo's military said the lawmaker was out of the country and that it acted to avoid a "total vacuum of power."

State television showed military leaders, including army chief of staff Gen. Zakari Nandja, swearing allegiance to the late leader's son, who was the minister of mines and communications. AP

G7 opens door to full debt relief

LONDON—The Group of Seven has opened the door for unprecedented 100-percent multilateral debt relief for the world's poorest countries but charities and experts are doubtful that such a move will see the light of day.

Finance chiefs from Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States broke new ground Saturday as they for the first time expressed readiness in a formal statement to provide 100 percent debt relief for the world's poorest nations.

The pledge came at the end of a two-day meeting of G7 finance ministers and central bankers during which a UK Europe-ill disorganized opposite criticism but failed to reach its global poverty. Dubbed a modern day Marshall Plan.

"G7 finance ministers have halted their differences and agreed to move together on debt, aid and trade," said Max Lawson, senior policy adviser for the charity Oxfam.

"They've passed the first hurdle of 2005, but they need to move quickly to turn their proposals into real change for the world's poorest.

"Two million children will die needlessly between now and the time meeting in April. If rich countries are going to keep their promise to tackle obscene poverty they need deliver—and deliver quickly," he added.

A statement Saturday said G7 countries had "agreed on a case-by-case analysis of HIPC countries, based on our willingness to provide as much as 100 percent multilateral debt relief."

The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) is a joint project of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that offers debt relief to the world's most impoverished nations that agree to undertake economic reforms.

"This is the first time in nearly a 100-percent debt relief has ever been detailed in a G7 communique," Brown, whose government holds the current presidency of the G7 and UN, told reporters at the meeting's conclusion.

But Britain's finance minister failed to win US approval for his ambitious scheme to provide debt relief and trade benefits to poor nations modelled on former US secretary of state George Marshall's grand project to restore the European economy from the devastation of World War II.

"The US is committed to poverty reduction for heavily indebted countries but we cannot support the IFF," US Undersecretary of the Treasury John Taylor told a news conference Saturday. AFP

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OPINION

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Precondition to peace

THE PEACE talks between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front resume in Kuala Lumpur this month. Because three armed encounters last month cast a pall over the already protracted peace process, the simple announcement that the next round will push through on schedule is cause for real, albeit cautious, optimism.

EDITORIAL Last month, a group of renegade MILF rebels attacked an army outpost in Matanogapon, Maguindanao, killing seven soldiers. And in pursuit of Indonesian members of the Jemaah Islamiyah terrorist group allegedly harbored by another MILF command, the Armed Forces' 6th Infantry Division launched two military strikes in three towns in Maguindanao. The AFP has claimed killing 40 armed men, including three of the Indonesians.

Both supporters and critics of the peace process have sounded the alarm over the encounters, fearing that they spell danger ahead. And Ramsey Granfelle, a multi-sectoral group of peace advocates, warned that the continuing pursuit of JI members was jeopardizing the 18-month old ceasefire itself. The group also appealed to the MILF to impose appropriate measures on the renegades, particularly its Commander Wahid.

Perhaps, unfortunately, the peace group sought to strike a balance, apportioning equal blame to the AFP and the MILF. If this is so, it is a stance we can easily understand. The group does not want to be perceived as favoring one side or the other.

But in this particular case, the equivalence of responsibility is in fact a false one. MILF renegades are a bigger threat to the peace negotiations than the military's continuing anti-terrorist operations.

Let us be clear: The status of "lost commands" in the MILF is a real obstacle to peace. They make arduous negotiations even more difficult. And they raise the question of whether any agreement reached during those negotiations can in fact be enforced.

On the other hand, neither the MILF nor any third party can seriously suggest that the government put its counter-terrorism campaign on hold. Jemaah Islamiyah, the al-Qaida-affiliated network seeking to establish a pan-Islamic state in Southeast Asia, is a dangerous threat to national security. And unlike the Moro rebellion, the solution to the JI problem is not and cannot be a matter of negotiation.

To be sure, Barney Granfelle's argument against the continuing JI "manhunt" revolves around the question of collateral damage on the civilian population. "Barney Granfelle appeals to the Armed Forces to strictly follow the guidelines of their Commander in Chief, (which are) meant to lower the impact of military operations on civilians," the group's statement last week read. They have a point; to the extent that it can, the military must warn civilians in a battle zone ahead of an operation, or narrow areas of operation away from centers of population. But like the proverbial guerrilla swimming in a sea of people, terrorists also seek cover by blending in.

The AFP believes that some members of the MILF continue to give refuge to JI partisans. If belief is reflected in reality, then these MILF members must bear joint responsibility for any collateral damage a counter-terrorism strike may inflict on civilians.

But "some members"? "These members"? The language considers as fact the question of renegade rebels has once again reared its head. Since the death of its founder, the MILF has had to struggle with the issue of the so-called lost commands. Their emergence has legitimized concerns about control—or the lack of it—over the MILF's 12,000 regulars. The MILF must resolve this issue soon and for all.

Strong will

UPON LEARNING an explosive, a middle-aged man in Baghdad brandished a gurkha cutlass, saying, "I will challenge the crime inside." In Idemi, a flame leader went to a grilling station each time another one, declaring that cutting a bullet was a sinner's thing that involving fellow sinners in sin.

Some similar news reports in the world about the eagerness of the

FOREIGN COMMENT

people to build a new nation with their own hands in the face of fierce resistance by insurgents. According to an estimate, over various reached approximately 80 percent. Arab TV audience reported to the enthusiasm of voters.

The Arabs Hezbollah has celebrated the long war. But we have studied the Iraqis great success in the elections. We admire the strong will of the Iraqis for standing on their own feet. The question now is how to increase such a will to build a stable nation.

Asahi Shimbun (Tokyo, Japan)

Misleading the public with statistics

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

THERE are a number of reasons why the people no longer trust this administration. Among them: this administration has lost its touch. Hardknight with Administration and has in fact been caught many times deliberately misleading and even misinforming the people.

For example, the government recently passed itself on the back for the gain in the exchange rate of the peso against the US dollar, making people believe that the peso is a stronger currency, the result of the measures that the administration has adopted. False.

The peso has indeed gained against the dollar in the exchange rate, but that is not because the peso has become stronger but because the dollar has become weaker. All the currencies in Asia, as well as the Euro, have appreciated in value against the dollar. Of course, the Philippine peso gained the least, while the other currencies have double-digit increases, the peso went up by a measly 3 percent. The realization currency increased by 45 percent, the Euro by 58 percent, and the other currencies by a little more. In effect, the peso went down in value against other currencies.

But all these the Arroyo administration hid from the people, praising itself, instead, for the peso's gain on the dollar. How can you trust an administration can such an important matter?

Another example is the alleged 6.1 percent increase in the gross domestic product (GDP). Again, the administration praised itself for this alleged "feat."

But what do we really have? Only numbers on pieces of paper. Do these numbers in any way bind on the welfare of the poor? Does the alleged growth in GDP create more job opportunities for more people? What good is "growth" if it does not improve the people's standard of living, too?

Those running the statistics are correct (the Philippine government has already been caught forging statistics in the past), the growth in GDP (this is the totality of the goods and services produced in the country) is only among the rich, but not among the poor. The growth is in the business sector—such as the telecommunications and transportation sectors that are not productive—but not in the productive sectors, such as agriculture. The alleged "growth" has not benefitted the common man. There has been no trickle-down effect in other words, the rich are getting richer but the poor are getting poorer.

But the government did not import this information to the people. It just said that the GDP has grown, as though the information would make the people feel less hungry.

Another area where the government is misleading the people is in the employment/unemployment data. According to statistics released by the administration, the unemployment rate is going down. But the government is choosing to overstep those who are employed and those who are not.

If a person has a relative who was able to work for at least three or "employed," even if he was jobless for 360 days of the year. And it considered only those who are looking for jobs but could not find one as "unemployed." If you are not looking for a job because you have given up or have no more hope of finding employment, you are not included in the "unemployed" list, even if you have been jobless for the last several years.

This is how the government has increased the employment rate and reduced the burden of jobless people. But the people do not receive the basic goods to maintain because their government is not telling them the whole truth.

Another area where the government is foolishly misleading the people is in the value added tax (VAT). Government propagandists assure the people that basic commodities, such as rice, fish, vegetables, cooking oil, will be exempt from the VAT. But if you take rice and veg-etables or buy cookers in cans, you actually already pay VAT on them. Besides, transportation is "VATable," so anything that is transported, such as rice and fish, goes to be covered by a way by the VAT. In short, there is nothing we can eat that is not subject to VAT. So the propaganda that basic commodities are VAT-exempt is a lie.

What are really VAT-exempt are most expenses, cosmetic surgery (breast implants, liposuction, facelifts or tummy tucks), jewelry, dining salons. All these are expenses incurred by the rich, usually only to inflate their ego, or make the beautiful people even more beautiful. These unnecessary, luxurious and frivolous expenses are exempt from the VAT but the food that the poor need to keep themselves alive are not.

This means the people are so relentlessly opposed to the VAT is that the government is not showing any signs that it is cutting costs, plugging the leakages from collection and taxpayers' money is being wasted on useless projects. The government only wants to tax and tax.

The government propaganda to push the VAT is that it needs the tax money to balance the budget and pay the one dollar. We didn't have to vote for the VAT in order to arrive to this, we gave the threat. But at the same time that it wants to squeeze the poor taxpayers of more taxes, it is not doing anything to reduce its expenses. Bothering all government officials—ambassadors, undersecretaries, representatives, senators, congressmen, etc.—must be 10 percent can save enough money that already approximates the additional collection to be derived from a higher VAT.

The congressional pork barrel is clearly and ostensibly a means of tax bribery and a source of corruption. Legally and morally it should be abolished, but there is no sign that the Arroyo administration will even reduce it, much less abolish it.

Shut up, shut up

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

DRAGON Rhapsodes, recent spokespersons of Joseph Estrada, had an interesting line last Wednesday: (PDI, 2/2/00):

Having cast all his cards on the speak with Fred. dens Estrada on a regular basis, "he says, "I can assure Gonzalo de Quiros that the former is in full control of his mental faculties when he states that he is ready to take up the cudgels for our countrymen and we have not hope (in a better term) that the current administration."

Fortunately he says, we many Filipinos, including me, "silently believe whatever the elite and the vested interest groups say about (Joseph) as his administration."

There is no truth, he says, to what I said in a column that John 1 and 2 were spoiled by the people living in and a country. Ergo, he says, was an ignoramus. "(Ang) was the presidential elections with the seniors margin ever recorded in Philippine electoral history. Contrary to De Quiros' claims, it was not the coverage, will of the people that broke President Estrada's career, but the will of the few who could not bear the thought of a President attending to the needs of the many above the aspirations of a powerful few."

All the sins attributed to the Estrada regime, he says, are now more in the GMA administration. Illegal gambling is everywhere, and the economy currently ranks among the most corrupt in the world. "De Quiros should worry about doing his share in stopping this hypocrisy."

What can I say? Dragons must have been running for reading fans lately in other columnists, which is why his literary skills still need polishing. I can assure him that he failed to read me on a consistent basis in his line, not him. But if he had taken to improving his mind by reading me, he would have known—as my enemies do, gnashing their teeth and sending me very veiled threats my way—that I have been doing that to clean my slate in praying to "stop the hypocrisy."

I have no problem with his president. I will go further and say that no government has plunged deeper to see all time low more than one does the current one. But I have a problem with his admirers. As I've also said in previous columns, the very soul of the GMA lie is not to go back to the Erap force. The way out of that paste is to go forward, not backward.

If Erap has gone clear "Erap paro at walang" for a breath. That line has been discredited long ago. There was little in Erap's rule that warranted such the mass, there was everything in it that reeked of crass. Of the worst form of elite, which was crony. You could not find a more glaring case than Lucio Tan, who had government at his beck and call and who indirect conscripted Erap to sing tatoo—that is the mass, my dear Dragodon—with an unsecure 50-year extension of collective bargaining agreement with Philippine Airlines. Erap chief of them, refused to buckle under.

As tyranny goes, if I recall right, the misery against Erap jumped to another level, to rock to storm accident into, with an act of treachery in a conference convened on Jose Cheesa Gimenez's then-pet against Erap. A congressional processed stopped from calling to repeatedly shouting—well, it wasn't "Shut up! Shut up!"—"Mr. Chairman! Mr. Chairman!" The gagging of Singson produced the opposite effect, which was to make her voice more. The congressman's name was Dolagen Dilangalen.

It's true Erap went by the biggest electoral margin any president has had. But it's just as true that he lost the vote of the very people who brought him there. Dragodon forgets that one thing that made Joko I a popular word and are just an elite one. That was the impeachment trial, which gripped the public imagination to a point that it completely skewed some the most popular miscreants of the time. The TV was to sidewalk sanctus because the impeachment trial, and newscasters and "pen" literally asked questions to preach the trial in the "big screen" and in air-conditioned luxury hotel-arches did the PBA games.

The trial, not unlike the miseveries, was a morality play a drama between good and evil, between the virtuous and the wicked. And the wicked, including, given a last by the "feats at black," the de-campanilla lawyers in suits, arrayed in defense of Erap on one side, and on the other, the other, meticulous congressmen who had forgotten their lawyerly skills but who fought on, armed only with truth and courage. Guess where the mass sided with.

If there is any valuable lesson to last to be gotten from John 1 and 2, it is simply this: the popular support, no John.

To this day, I cannot understand why anyone would denigrate it in the nation thing in the world to mount an John. The worry that we would be making a travesty of John by having a John 4 or 5 is simply unfounded. "People power" does not happen by chance, or by caprice or by accident. It is the end of a long process of the raised being goaded into action by a succession of what it said a hope of what can be. The reason the opposition hasn't been able to mount one—though it has been desperately trying since the day it entered the cells to put them in a due to make it easier for the elite to put them in a due is because people must to do so.

For reasons that are patent. The opposition has no credibility. The problem precisely lies in the fact that though most Filipinos are deeply disgusted with the current government, as they were with the previous, they are not able to find an alternative to it. That alternative is not, and cannot be, a return to the very thing the people—me, the mass chief of them—rejected as misfortune in them. The only way to get rid of a bad thing is to get rid of it.

Just one last thing: Dilangalen says he can assure me Erap is in full control of his mental faculties. Ah, his he promises he is in the best position to know what constitutes it.

Cultural insights

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cassiano

EARLIER, I had written about the sorry state of Philippine education as assessed by Education Secretary Florencio Abad, and what the government is doing about it with the help of the private sector. The problem: that only 67 out of every 100 Filipinos qualified for school age in school, despite basic education being free and compulsory; of the 67, only 62 manage to graduate from elementary, while only half get to graduate from high school.

Dr. Yeo Lay Hwee, executive director of the Temasek Foundation, president of Nalanda Institute. The press notes that while the dropout statistics had improved somewhat, the last scenario that "53 per cent of our elementary school-age kids remain illiterate, and the subsequently unable to read a simple text remains dire."

* * *

Dr. Yeo says he first came across the shortening dropout problem in 1965, in the first Annual National Philippine Conference & Personnel Association. He introduces us a "psychological shock" he never forgot. At that time he was working with the Philippine Normal College (now Normal Junior Science University), founded by Don Salvador Araneta, after finishing his master's degree at the famous University he started teaching in the Philippines. He was shocked to learn from the dropout statistics burned in his mind and he resolved to do something about it. One day, he and a young volunteer in his guidance class, Ms. Corazon Sison, went to the elementary school in Sampaloc, Manila and contacted the authorities there to furnish them the addresses of the kids who had dropped out. After visits to the kids and talks with their parents, the partnership of Corazon, Yeo and Sison quarried the issues of the dropout—poverty. He named his "Bukh Outreach" project, incorporating this in 1974 as Iloko Foundation. Today Iloko supports 10,000 students in various levels—the bulk of them in elementary—with school books and materials, uniforms and transportation allowances.

* * *

Secretary Abad noted even that one reason for the poor performance of our public elementary schools is the lack of pre-school preparation; unlike in the more advanced countries and the children of affluent families here, our poor kids don't get to attend pre-school. It's by sheer fortune that, as he wrote me, "in addition to poverty there was illiteracy in my family." Both parents finished only elementary school but were married. Seeing the lack of possibility of the poor to succeed in private kindergartens or pre-schools. There were no free government pre-schools.* This prompted him to (he says, in addition to their "Bukh Paradise" project) set up free kindergarten classes—for the children of the poor to learn on equal footing to successfully enter and persevere in public elementary schools.

This year Iloko Foundation's budget is only 6.67% over last year's budget of P3.6 million. It hopes to raise P10,000 a year to operate. This could be a good project for some of our civic clubs or kindhearted citizens to adopt. Call Dr. Yeo at 750-4310 or 750-3108.

* * *

Our lolo's second daughter, Christine, is married to Isabelo Milo, an investment banker who works in Singapore. During the holidays, these days, they were here to join up with our clan and to escape from the cold in Japan. Isabelo's parents, 74-year-old Onanna Milo, a retired engineer with a lot of work experience in the mines in the Cagayan Valley, and Lolo Isabelo, also came and experienced for the first time our rambunctious New Year's Eve celebrations. If much our drama spills, they didn't give a hint it was a new cultural experience for them.

* * *

It took off the time Nat, Onanna and Isabelo stood up to something very special: a traditional opening dance host by Lolo Isabelo and Lolo Nat's and daughter's Global City apartment. Mr. Japanese Isabelo thoughtfully brought all the ingredients from their native Iloko, to ensure that the Japanese maid would be authentic. We began with the traditional appetizers, called "Co-ordinate," which always consist of cold foodstuffs, such as processed hams and seaweeds. Isabelo explained that these things are always prepared ahead, to give the Japanese housewives a break from cooking the big New Year. They came to lemons, highly expensive items here and the Japanese even use bonsai, which seem ruined by the cold weather. Isabelo explained that the flowers and Japanese women had could have been in active eating a traditional New Year's breakfast, and we showed our appreciation by gobbling up every bit of the delicious meal.

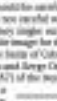
* * *

Two days later we took the four oldies on a tour of Corregidor, which, I must say, was very well-organized by Sun Cruises. At first we hesitated to bring our elders, as it might be an exhausting adventure the wrong way; but we all agreed, from the start, that we were ready for Corregidor.

Seeing the destruction all around the island thirteen and Manila, I was struck by what a commemorative fire on board the hydrofoil. Before that we had about the enormous loss of lives on both sides. But Osamu couldn't understand how Gen. Douglas MacArthur, who had originally commanded a combined allied force of 100,000, could have thought of leaving his men and fleeing to Australia. The Japanese troops, under Lieutenant General Homma, of course, were to fight to the last man, which made their campaign against MacArthur's evasive offensive. I explained that it wasn't the general's decision but an order from the US high command—or that he could personally take charge of the reconquest of the Philippines and Asia. But Osamu, who would have been drafted into the war as a young man had it dragged on for another year, still found it hard to understand that MacArthur's flight was justified.

Those few days of the new year were very extremely informative for all of us.

Photo ops



READERS' ADVOCATE

Raul J. Palabrica

SOME politicians should be canceled with respect to their appearances. If they are too careful with their facial expressions while on camera, they might run off the public record of conveying a favorable image for themselves.

This is how Bovie Ilarde of Cebu City looks at the pieces of brassiere that Bossi and Sergio Osmeña that came out in the sen. Jil Sotto (Page A7) of the nuptials of her parents, Sotto was drawn doing a "thumbs down" gesture while displayed on camera. Senator-cum of College Assistance Plan. The two had a happy hook-on-hand hunt.

The photo-ops, pointed the town to post-ban, opposite mayors of Olongapo, three former governors will investigate the cash-strapped GSP for its alleged failure to throw its fiesta-ball summit meeting to the 700,000-to-population Filipinos. Another three mayors are related since they married the latter's "Pandesal-lover but for Kidlat's delicacies."

The readers' verses: "I am just wondering why Sen. Bong Revilla and Sen. Sergio Osmeña are smiling while making a thumbs down sign in a DBP card. Are they 'glad' that many Filipinos are now unsure if their children can go to college or are they elated that many Filipinos might not get their pensions anymore?"

I, too, felt uncomfortable when I first saw that picture. Ominously, it was not a modern or candid shot. It looked like the two senators called up to pick either card and made the gestures mentioned for the reader for the benefit of an incorrect photographer.

I do not know what was going in the minds of Bossi and Osmeña on that date, but one thing is sure: GSP's right-hand seat situation is no laughing matter; for the affected pinoy-holders, it is a cause for serious worry.

Politburo

The photo in question must have reached a new zenith among the cinematics of Filipino families that surrounded the most important issues of the season in GSP's selection and premier plans. From the looks of it, GSP may find it difficult to defend its premises to them.

Bb Sinit artists, Nonoy Lubo (a supposedly media savvy) and Osmeña may have conveyed a most unnatural "three-fist, lifting while Bossi was listening." It's a kind of message that some politicians do not want to convey, at this time when the collegiate kinship of their children are in danger of being designated by GSP-relations to pay the interest for that is summoned to debate.

A reporter became photographer I talked to about the picture was not surprised by that photo-boobies; it was bound to happen. In the political officials, in particular, courting and retainers, are so enamored with publicity that they practically work our media photographers to "shoot more" in the hope that the shots will be used by the newspaper editors or TV producers.

On numerous some of these publicity hounds who have this penchant of posing for candids or their official photos—they say a photographer from this newspaper shooting his camera at the group. To make that interview set for short, as it is a rule in the dailies: look convincing, the "interview" poses on a serious facial look or makes a gesture that gives the impression that he is actively involved in the discussion.

But the photographers are already wise to these strategy. If the "interview" is not to be for authentic official, they recommend to the editorial desk that the "guest-makers" be "digitally cropped" from the photo or maintain in image by

Camera conscious

On the few occasions that I went to Congress to attend to radio functions, I observed that our lawmakers are very conscious of their dress. Walk or talk, where there are photographers or TV cameras in the premises.

Our congressmen or senators are only too happy to oblige the requests of newspaper photographers, especially from the broadsheets, to ask their picture while inside the session hall. And more as if those photographs it to the front pages of the newspapers.

A photographer of this newspaper told me that the posting for photos by politicians is more pronounced inside Malacañang. Where an event is held in the Palace with the President in attendance, the occasion is not complete with out the attendance asking that their pictures be taken while they are with the President.

For prospective candidates for public office, these photos would be effective propaganda materials in the campaign, especially if they belong to the President's political party.

It is my contention as our public officials, the starting for publicity also applies to so-called outsiders or "power people" whose work is not complete unless they see their names in the gossip columns or newspapers or they are featured in TV programs that cater to their social class.

Welcome

Still on the subject of photo ops, I learned from an honorable photographer that the same-oriented groups in our country are no different from our politicians when it comes to posing for the camera.

While the photographers or TV cameras personnel are covering the demonstrations of these organizations, the action is usually focused. The placards are raised high for everybody to see and the protests are shouted loud and close to the boom microphones can pick them up. As soon as the interest of the media people cease' have the area, so do the rallyists and their leaders.

Interview says, she became published a photo of the members of a leftist group manning the picket line in a five-star hotel in Makati City in support of the labor union dead-locked in collective bargaining negotiations with the management.

The day after the protest concerned, I received a strong letter from another left-leaning organization protesting the newspaper's favorable treatment of that event. It complained that when it undertook a similar action earlier, the reporter did not send a reporter or photographer so the public would have known what they did for the striking workers.

What I tried to explain the reason for the absence of the newspaper's reporter or photographers from the events, I got a lecture on fair news reporting and an assurance that the newspaper will "in the payroll" of no rival group!

* * *

The reader's advocate may be reached at the following addresses: "The Readers' Advocate" c/o Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue corner Yague and Mercedes Streets, Makati City. Or through fax no. 897-4783 to 84, or reader-advocate@inquirer.com.ph.

Memories of early schooling

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Norahyn Mustafa

ON MY second year of high school, the first thing we did before classes was to knock down and clear the mounds made by mud crabs the previous year. The school principal who founded, pre-military academies with steps and one wall of bamboo bamboo over an earthen floor. The classrooms were built around a quadrangle in the center of which was our library, also of bamboo, including the floor.

But we forgot all about the mud holes the moment our teacher brought us to the classroom where Shylock (the merchant of Venice, remember?) was held a short distance away, in a wooden extension that used to be the school's director office, while those for freshmen and sophomores were further away in a wing of the dormitories affixed. On rainy days, our feet had to wade through the flooded athletic field to get there.

How we learned how to make patterns, sketches, diagrams and drawings, using bolo sharpeners and pineapple spoon down colors, to create the art impressions and mixtures, to produce a "textured mural" and complete a balanced budget, to hand-sew a set of aprons, per bodice and "machine-sew a set—a "headband" which had to be sewn by nothing sheets, a complete layout, schematics and two kinds of dresses.

We were also taught how we came into being, what happens to our bodies as we grow, the female reproductive organs, and proceeding to conception, evidently, how to husband home a baby (each of us had to take turns holding the doll with the whole class rooting their observations and comments), and what's our preferred sex type?).

The objective seemed to be that if you got married right after high school you'd need no more lives, ready to face the world.

Extracurricular and other school activities took place in the grandstand in the athletic field fronting our school. Here we staged plays and tableaux, delivered our campaign speeches—mine "supported plagiarism" from the speech of Jose Rizal, Manuel Quezon, Claro M. Recto and Carlos Romulo—for the student government elections.

There was no laboratory to speak of and the science teachers had to bring thermometers and test tubes to class if only to show us how the instruments described in our textbooks looked and felt in real life. We ran random tests of the weather as we only knew about it from the weather bulletins, and we learned how to tell storms in the tropics by the whole miracle of life from the amoeba to the dodo-saurus. But the lessons were thus memorable.

I spent my high school years in the country (actually nothing else but a big library next to the laboratory and a well-equipped kitchen for Home Economics. There was no gym, but we had a basketball court in the quadrangle.

Our school was the "social hub" in the country" for near enough for us to walk home although we had a school bus that brought us to and from school in the morning, at noon, and after town, for which we paid P5 a month. It was also the salary of the driver and for the rest of the gas. Packed lunches were ordered of.

Here we took some evening black lectures's session for before the class, and learned, speechless, proper table manners. I learned to say "Pass Cream," while asking for more cream, for life, the means that he thought was the message of the entire ballroom: "I will not eat through the bread-bin," "some kind of bird or other like to drink," and by my soul resolved to use! And answered, "I must not forget and fail."

Best of all, the school stood on a huge campus that one-third of which was flowers and scenic beauty. There was no need to "go" to a park or a garden or a reputable garden where we take planted peanuts and calories. If you got on the first crop of the bus at 6:30 a.m., you could visit your "plot" and check it out. We had also sprouted the tapa bakery, while that eating at the school at the cafeteria, flavored by the warmer on the drawings and call reading in the basement grass.

But there was really in life, I learned that all good things must end. And I was only cooked that afternoon of my freshman year with the last flag ceremony on the last day of classes, before "summer vacation." I cried with unbearable sorrow.

Then I went to Manila to study in Assumption. We had a new building by the sea, constructed on the same spot where the pre-war Ateneo High School had stood and where my mother graduated from.

Only the sound of waves crashing against the boulders reminded me that I was no longer in a verdant school paper in a suburb by the library. Manila was a typhoon. Here we did class and here we all crowded out to be self-aware etc.

We quickly learned to be self-conscious in classes and elsewhere; some of us now live and work abroad. We became fairly successful professionals, engineers, businessmen, politicians, bureaucrats, and one prominent journalist, and international lawyer who brought up healthy, bright and responsible children, and who didn't get bored or feel abandoned by a husband.

"We" reserved our reminiscences in the golden years. I suppose we'll meet up in soup-cubes somewhere...in the generous provisions of the country where even schoolchildren are free and for believers, and where going to school in peace is a preferred privilege—unless afford the time and the expense for pre-school and additional years of secondary education. And give us well-educated, well-trained and committed teachers, and good, well-picked textbooks. That's all.

* * *

Comments or reflections e-mail PHI@yahoo.com

Testimony

THE LONG VIEW

Maynard L. Gonzales III

PLANT a rose, Sow a child, write a book: for many people, all of these are the benchmark of achievement. Let me know if that does it. Gonzo, who has a progressive kindergarten in Paseo before me and her husband completed in Australia in 1982, has planted one child. But she, my husband and I have written a book. Her book, "Three Lives Remain," published by the De La Salle University Press in 2005 has, sadly, not reached many bookstores, but it is a book deserving of the widest possible audience. It is not necessarily because, as the anniversary of her life as an individual, of her life in her long and loving marriage with Amina Gonzo, and of the life of the generation that came of age during World War II and the whole turbulent post-war era.

Ms Gonzo's life story, as the title of her autobiography states, spans three continents: Asia, Europe and Australia. It also spans three periods of the Filipino experience: the pre-war, during the years immediately after the war, and the 'liberation' years, now apparently so normal, and the Filipino diaspora to all four corners of the globe in the 1970s and 1980s. Without any pretense, and with disarming honesty, she chronicles her life, her impressions, the people she loves and knows, presenting portraits of the highest importance: a summary of the century in miniature.

Ms Gonzo's autobiography is the book opening world war II, from the Japanese invasion to the Battle of Manila (the 60th anniversary of which was silently recalled last Feb. 3) this centenary just ending. Ms Gonzo begins with relocating members from a close-knit family in Manila to Baguio and Bontoc. Then, she indicates that 30,000 civilians perished in those 28 days that it took for Manila to be liberated, due to enemy and artillery shelling from the mountains. Gonzo's throughout told in a kinds of the conservative exercise and pillage of the desperate Japanese forces, before their ultimate long bedpacks."

Ms Gonzo's harsh tales of her families' experience during the destruction of Manila in 1945, in the fifth chapter of her book, is captured in drawing and horrifying reading. Her writers must not flinch—but must be honest and true. And she is. Her writing is not sensational, but it is not dull either. It is a testimony to the human spirit, to the ability of people to survive and to endure. Her writing is not sensational, but it is not dull either. It is a testimony to the human spirit, to the ability of people to survive and to endure.

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No to Burma as Asean chair

MC support that, Agustito Sitanggang, Indonesia's ambassador to Burma (Myanmar) scheduled chairmanship of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in 2006. The position taken by Thailand is clear—"Myanmar does not deserve to chair Asean in 2006."

The insistence for international dialogue (ID), an international non-government organization advocating for justice and democracy in Burma, believes that the Philippine government should step aside letting to Asean's constructive engagement policy on Burma because this policy has failed miserably to bring justice and democracy in that country. Worse, despite promises from the international community, the military rulers in Rangoon remain intransigent in starting democratic political reforms.

Violations of human rights characterize rape, arbitrary killings, forced labor, forced relocations and destruction of ethnic villages. Aung San Suu Kyi, Burma's democracy icon, remains under house arrest. And despite the promises of the ruling State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) to address human rights and reconciliation and to reform the country, local authorities are still bullying their own citizens.

Rights abuse the matter of Gen. Khin Nyunt last year, the junta of equally repressive generals led by Gen. Than Shwe—the alleged mastermind of the Depayin massacre in Burma—ordered the old premier of reforms. Desperate to gain international recognition, the junta released more than 5,000 prisoners at the height of the Asean Summit in Laos. However, Burma's members knows that most of the released prisoners were not political dissidents but petty criminals. Also, the junta shows no sign of freeing opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and has even extended her house arrest for another year.

We believe it is high time for the Philippine government, the Asean and the United Nations to change their policy on Burma. The Asean, in particular, should not use to expel dictators.

As a reward instead of democracy to Asia and the survivor of a dictatorship, the Philippines has the obligation to lead Asean in criticizing Burma's human rights record and pressuring Burma to restore democratic reforms.

Nitanel is right—that the issue of the neighbor is on fire, we cannot just fold our hands and say we cannot interfere. We should at least call the attention of that neighbor that his or her house is on fire. And if Burma is unwilling to change, Asean should not give it the Asean chair in 2006, instead Asean should call for its expulsion.

There is no doubt about it, Asean's constructive engagement policy with Burma is a failure. The generals ruling Burma have only used our policy to buttress their own interests. Surely as Asean chair in 2006 is simply unacceptable.

—GINA MIGLAS,
executive director,
Initiatives for International
Dialogue—IID,
23 Street 13, Cand Bldg.,
Annex Road, Quezon City

The Saloma option

IN THE INQUIRER Ass. 14 issue, it was reported that former Sen. Jovito Salonga was duped by activists to lead the impeachment drive against President Macapagal-Arroyo. He declared the effort due to impairment of his sight and hearing.

Considering his undoubtedly character, his clarity of thinking and excellence in writing in spite of old age, this legal luminary, lawyer and professor and senator is most qualified to lead our country and rebuild our once proud state.

Our commoner intellectuals cannot change their ways. Idealists can not unsubsidized and improvised moment. But I am of the strong belief that Salonga is capable of reforming our government given the chance. What knows, this great man may be the long awaited messiah of our oppressed and yearning countrymen.

—BENJAMIN C. DE LA FUENTE,
3838 Bluemarine St.,
Sta. Cruz, Manila

LETTERS

SSS urged to be more considerate

THE GOVERNMENT is not supposed to make life difficult for senior citizens (Filipinos who are over 60 years old). But the government is failing us and disrupting the Social Security System. The SSS has various ways to report to any SSS office before Jan. 31, 2005 for the 2004 income that can still allow the pensioner to continue receiving my monthly pension.

When I complied, a functionary in the SSS NAIC, East Service, Dasmariñas City told me to "come back next year" because the system is not enough SSS employees to interview the hundreds of SSS pensioners who had received denial of my. When I insisted on being interviewed, an SSS woman employee told me to see Ms. Rosario Lopez who insisted that I return the following day. Also, a security guard threatened to fire to suspension and him follow orders.

Before leaving the SSS NAIC, I asked some SSS pensioners how long they have been waiting for the interview and all of them told me that they have been going back there for several days for the interview for fear of losing their monthly pension.

Since the SSS cannot guarantee an interview on SSS pensioners on the day he/she reports in the office, because of system problem or oversight management incompetence, the SSS should open an extension from non-working Saturday (1) interview the pensioners the moment he/she, (2) by mailing the SSS interview form to the pensioner, or (3) by sending an SSS interviewer to the pensioner's home.

Certainly, SSS can do better. Many of us senior citizens have any respect for SSS pensioners as expressed of until seemingly months of their annual valuation to the millions. Don't you think so?

—T.B. AREVAN,
13-A Emerald St.,
North Fairview, Quezon City

Investigate the ERC

THIS is in relation to the decision of the Energy Regulatory Commission granting the National Power Corp. a provisional authority to increase its rates (rates by 40 centavos per kWh). Opponents, the rate hiking implementation is 71.56. Let us consider the following:

1. The ERC appears to have usually forgotten the nightmare of 13-14-hours provisional in summer granted to Meralco in 1994, which resulted to a massive, boggling, overcollection of P13 billion, the refund of which was ordered by the Supreme Court in 2003. The ERC has not learned a lesson. Should the provisional increase be proved to be unwarranted, how will Napocor be able to refund the overcollection when it is unlisted since 2001? Will Napocor be in debt—and save P200 billion in international loans?

2. The ERC granted the power rental authority while the hearing is only going on, with Napocor and its plants as parties to the case. Usually, the approval was rushed in order that the much-delayed privatization of Napocor could be made attractive to investors as the ERC is the government and the consumers.

3. The decision of the ERC did not even mention the causes of Napocor's huge losses and parties responsible for them. The rental power plants and barges. The rental power of Napocor without any capacity prior to Gabe by the dare Independent power producers of Meralco. This is vulgar and unseeming.

4. Meanwhile, the ERC allows Meralco to pass on to the consumers its systems' inefficiencies, power pilferage and systems loss (6 percent of current loss). (The Electric Power Industry Reform Act allows only 2 percent.)

This is a blatant violation of the ERC's mandate to protect the interests of the consumers instead of the utility's.

5. Adding insult to injury, why does the ERC allow Meralco to arbitrarily disconnect service without the dare about the consumer has an outstanding dispute for service and unpaid bills? As these deposits are no longer allowed under the new Magna Carta for Consumers. Electricity Users, why will the ERC order Meralco to refund those billions amounting to over P12 billion plus interest? Incidentally, a Pang ETC ruled that arbitrary disconnection is without due process and illegal.

7. Lastly, what happened to the orders of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals nullifying the power adjustment and calling for the refund of the amount granted to the ERC to Meralco? How they been completely forgotten?

It has become imperative for Congress to look and re-examine, in the light of implementation, these highly anomalous practices and abuses being perpetrated against the public due to the failure of the ERC to exercise its mandate.

—LORENZO M. SAÑGALAN,
executive director
and spokesperson,
Federation of Concerned
Organizations of Sales (FOCS),
2048 Pinoy St.,
Sales, Manila

Whitewashed?

HOME TIMES in May 2000, officials of the Barangay Holy Spirit Homeowners Association, Inc. (BHSHAI) and the Bureau of Licenses were the subject of a front page news story of the location for hiding the "lifestyle check." What has happened to these officials?

I learnt that the BHS officers—who live in the Ayala Mahogany area 11 vehicles and hordes of businesses and other properties—has "disposed of" his assets to his relatives and friends. In fact, the Ayala Mahogany house has been purportedly sold to an in-law, who is a corporation. According to the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, the Ayala Mahogany house is registered in the name of the BHS official's sister-in-law who has no means to acquire it. How does she been find against the document?

Coin, Carlos Cayetano properties were seized. Why not also the assets of those BHS and commissioners?

—ADOLFO MONCAYARAL,
1200 Dagupan St.,
San Andres, Manila

Let the truth see the light

LAST Sunday's Talk of the Town (TNT, 1/30/05) laid bare the deep wounds that have been eating at the once glorious Left movement that I respected in the dark days of martial law. When I cried and saw was ugly and demeaning.

Cadenia de Alice, Kampanyang Ako, Operation Hearing Task, Save the Center—what horror. Sounds like the military (read: right wing and fascist) campaigns in those days. Unlike so many of us, I could be the Pol Pot, no.

That Shairile Reyes exposes the dark side of the Communist Party of the Philippines-National Democratic Front is admirable, particularly when Jose Ma. Sison unabashedly intends to kill Satur. Before the let the guns shower with those People's Army executions, or longer with airplane and everyone being added to the list, let's have an independent truth commission to investigate these crimes once and for all.

My compatriots, I mean neither more nor less.

—RUTTY DIEMO-PASTOR,
Quezon City

A difficult task for Aglipay

IF I may quote like the silent majority and do not speak of the unsolved job PNP Director General Edgar Aglipay has been doing as chief of the Philippine National Police, I would be missing out on a great opportunity to help promote loyalty and dedication to service among public officials. As it has been said, till it takes for evil to flourish is for good men to do nothing. With 7 peoplenot the judge and say, for good work to flourish, good men must encourage and motivate it.

I believe that Aglipay is not the first to try to clean up the PNP which recently for a year saw in terms of public respect and confidence. During his term as PNP chief, Gen. Basilio Garcia made serious efforts in fighting corruption and instilling discipline in our police ranks.

It will take time to restore our people's respect and confidence in the police, but I applaud Aglipay's valiant efforts and I hope for some reins in this seemingly monumental, if impossible, task. It is good to know that he is in educating the police and sending them back to school to improve their behavior. And it is wonderful to see uniformed men in churches rather than to bars and drinking places.

—APOLLO BLANCO,
32 Mistletoe Drive,
Beverly Hills, Antipolo

Change of heart is needed

"If Bill pervades to the article of Galatians 5: Ephesians, stated "We are to cybercrime, PNP [unreason]." (TNT, 1/28/05)

The arresting officers of the Philippine National Police stated that Republic Act 9208 (Anti-Trafficking of Persons Act) has nothing to do with dealing against cybersex and, as a result, the government "has no obligation to file criminal cases in Regional Trial Courts in Angeles, Pampanga." Worse, the article likewise cited a Department of Justice resolution, dated June 1, 2004, stating that "mere possession of accessories used in the illegal activity was not enough to charge the alleged operators for violation of the law."

The situation really puts the above-cited laws will always be new situations and activities not covered by law, has risky nevertheless retains human dignity and morality. There will always be people who will create new ideas and propositions which are basically evil and contrary to the basic constitutes of man. There are the people who feed on and torture their fellow men. They have no sense of morality or accountability in a superior being, which, does will always be new crimes unimaginable decades ago.

The decision to be acquitted with all those in

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QC community stands up to rising crime

RESIDENTS of Project 4 in Quezon City are taking a more active role in preventing crime in their community.

Parent said the apparent inability of the police to protect them from criminals, residents mustered in the streets urging neighbors to join a movement to stop criminality in the largely middle-class constituency.

Carrying a streamer and signs, local folk, mostly members of the Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Parish, also sought justice for Ivy Dizon, a 24-year-old clerk who was gunned down during a robbery.

Wake up!

The procession ahead of the march read "Unity Project 4! Bicha Lahat sa Barangayan Para sa Magpapayapa at Masaklap na Project 4 (Wake Up Project 4! March Against Violence. For a Peaceful and Prosperous Project 4!)," while the signs said "Suggests ang dayalogue at Resolusyon Mahinto Ito! (Stop it. "No Vigilante" and "Justice for Ivy."

Parish priest Fr. Robert Reyes, who led the demonstration, said that aside from rallying people to join their streets into clean, they were drawing attention to the rising incidence of crime.

One of the strategies being considered is the setting up of hills at strategic places.

Residents could ring these hills to seek help if something wrong should happen, Reyes told the marchers.

More than a week ago, two robbers on a motorcycle shot Dizon near her house on Legaspi Street after she refused to give up her cellular phone.

Reyes said the area lot to the head and died while undergoing surgery.

First to die

Although Dizon was the first to die in the hands of criminals, Reyes said she was not the first parishioner to fall prey to robbers.

Residents have been pointing on a robber on a motorcycle as behind the series of cell phone robberies in Project 4, he said.

"We want to create a more sensitive community. We will be more proactive this time," the priest said.

But while the hills are not yet ready, Reyes asked his parishioners to use their mobile and landline phones to alert authorities about suspicious persons or happenings.

He also urged the police not only to intensify patrols and go after Dizon's killers but also to prevent crimes in the community.

"We hope to make Project 4 a peaceful community again," he added. Edison C. Bordeo Jr.

Two teenage boys die drag racing

TWO 17-YEAR-OLD boys died when their car were under a truck trailer while allegedly engaged in drag racing along the Diosdado Macapagal Boulevard in Parañaque City at 2 a.m. yesterday.

Police identified the fatalities as Rhiland Norie Jose Juan of Interior Street, La Paz Village, Makati, and Jhon Allan Crescini of Pedro Street, San Andres Bukid, Manila.

Juan, who was reportedly driving the ill-fated Opel Astra (NNE-450), died on the spot. Crescini died in the hospital. Irene G. Perez

Toughie's life was worth ₱5

A FEARSOME price for some people charge.

Rusty Bautista, of Agustin Street, Tondo, Manila, was stabbed dead with his own knife after he allegedly tried to extort ₱5 from a motorcycle dispatcher in this area, Saturday.

Police said Bautista demanded ₱5 from Manuel Lopez Jr., 45, at about 6:45 p.m. but the latter refused.

Irked, Bautista reportedly pulled out a knife and tried to stab Lopez. However, Lopez managed to grab the knife and drove it into Bautista's side. Reyna S. Quicoseado

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e. Two letters of recommendation from a former professor or dean;
f. Police Clearance.

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4. Applicants must pass an interview session.

5. Applicants must pass the Admission Examination.

6. Applicants must obtain their baccalaureate degree by the end of the second semester preceding admission to medical school. Those who will graduate after the summer session preceding admission to medical school will be considered on a case to case basis.

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"That in all things God may be glorified."

Shari'ah lawyer reported abducted

By Ishmael C. Rasdas, Jr.

LIE NOLA casting grilled fish when they arrive and took him away.

On Friday night, more than 20 men with rifles and handguns barged into a crowded neighborhood in Barangay Tatlac, Quezon City, and reportedly took Ustadz Feisal Rahaman.

Until yesterday afternoon, relatives and neighbors would not find Rahaman, 32. He is a Shari'ah lawyer and a teacher at a madrasah at the Bahauin Mosque Compound in Tatlac.

He arrived in Metro Manila about a year ago to prepare for and take the bar exams.

"We suspect that either the police or the military is behind this," said Abuhakim party-list group spokesman Nasrullah Alambra during a press conference yesterday.

Nowhere to be found

Datarahan said his party chatched with the Bahauin Capital Region Police Office if it had the men mentioned but Director Jacinto Ligot Jr. told them it did not.

Witnesses heard some of the men say "Tiga-NBI kayo (We're from the NBI)."

But Alambra also checked with the National Bureau of Investigation and got nothing.

In an interview, Central Police District director Marcelo Rodriguez told the business that they did not arrest Rahaman.

However, Rodriguez said a unit from the Army had informed the CPD's Tactical Operations Center that it would be conducting an operation in Quezon City.

The said was part of the Army's intelligence and security group.

Not even in Bonifacio

But relatives of Rahaman who went to Army headquarters in Fort Bonifacio said the military took denied hearing he's there.

"We will continue looking for him in all detention centers. He is innocent," Datarahan said.

Jan. Alonto, 32, was standing now to Rahaman when the men carrying guns came about 8:45 p.m. Friday.

He said Rahaman was eating grilled fish in front of a store.

"Suddenly, several armed men pointed me. When I looked back, they had taken (Rahaman) away," Alonto said.

Rahaman's cousin MNO Samad Rahaman said some of the men pointed their guns at his house before dragging his cousin "like an animal."

Rahaman accused government of indifference toward Muslims.

BF says he will not quit MMDA

NO PAGE

That was Go in reverse of Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) Chair Bayani Fernando in prompts seeking his resignation.

Several transport and other poor groups are clamoring for Fernando to step down, claiming that his programs were antipoor and oppressive.

But Fernando, saying he has a "one track mind," is firm in implementing his maverick projects.

"My spirit or cannot will stop me from doing what I think is right," Fernando declared early and in his television yesterday.

He has been intent on bringing order to the chaos of Metro [illegible] Irene G. Perez

Across the NATION

Save ancestral homes, owners appeal

By Elvie A. Fuentes
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACLAYON, Bohol—Ten families here have asked Freedom Mascapagal-Arroyo to help save their ancestral homes that will be affected by an on-going road-widening project.

"We want to join as our last hope to stem this tide of apathy and misunderstanding," the group told the President in a letter sent last month.

The residents said the Department of Public Works and Highways has conducted a widening of the coastal highway of Barangay Poo, the oldest *ilalum-an* (center) of heritage in the province.

They said that Gov. Erico Aumentado host ancestral home during their dialogue that the two-kilometer stretch road and rest of the beautiful and historic church complex would be spared from the widening.

Still, they added, the DPWH continued with the project. "Impasto! ailan [man] agreed with the governor."

The group pointed out that if the plan was implemented, most of their houses would either be partially or fully demolished and "more part of the church facility will be affected."

"We expressed our appeal to redesign the widening project to spare our homes but due to the local clamor for 'progress' by our other co-Boholanos, we who own these heritage structures feel isolated and misunderstood as against development," the group stressed.

They told the President that most, if not all of their homes, were constructed at the turn of the century and display the characteristics of native Boholano architecture.

"We are not against development per se, but if this means destroying a major part of the tangible heritage that make up the cultural history of our community and town, we will protest via appeal," they added.

"We have been planning as a group to maximize the historicity of our sites by developing heritage inns or stops which visitors can appreciate. Destroying part or all of any of our homes decreases the moral image of our cultural legacy, in soul, in spirit," the group stressed.

Their struggle to preserve their homes was being supported by a delegation from the Metropolitan Museum of Manila including arts patron Ina Zobel.

Aside from Zobel, the delegation included Pilar Aquino, Karen Santos, Dakoh Reyes, Jose Ramon Molina, Vince Catalano, Tim Yap, Dominique Rue-Henry, Julie Claude Van Reyes, Olivia Carreon, Gil Montano, Miguel Rosales, Cecilia Manalo, Joseph Gonzales, Silvia Lacks, Mario Pontanio, Didier Perquin and Jose Aguirre.

"We didn't realize how much the weight of the past is held to those homes," Zobel said on the safety during an informal gathering of Manila-based art lovers and representatives of the old homes at the home of Dr. Juanito Ayo sr.

Zobel expressed disgust over the disregard for the culture and the past by implementers of road widening project and warned that she has would be inspired able.

"What would you show if you get rid of those beautiful homes?" she asked.

Another Bayan Muna leader slain

LUCENA CITY—The Bayan Muna coordinator of this city was preparing supper for his family. Little did Ronnie Almasen, 38, know that it would be his last.

At about 7 p.m. on Saturday, two motorcycle-riding assailants barged inside the Almasen house in Purok Maralitnin, an urban poor district in Barangay Gotra in this city, and killed the activist leader. A police report said the victim suffered four lethal wounds and three stab wounds in different parts of the body. He was declared dead on arrival at the hospital.

After the killing, the suspects escaped aboard a motorcycle, passing through a maze of alleys.

Pedro Gonzales, Batmalabayan national vice chair, immediately pointed at the so-called "death squad," allegedly composed of active military personnel and members of para-military groups, as responsible for the murder.

"The military has again unleashed the death squad. Ronnie's violent death is just the latest rung of terror to silence the ranks of mass activists. But we will not be cowed in fear," said Gonzales, himself a survivor of a spy attempt last year in Gumaca, Quezon.

He blamed the so-called "death squad" as responsible for the rash of violence being committed against leftist activists in Southern Tagalog.

Sta. Cruz Police Senior Inspector Lazaro Command spokesperson, strongly denied Bayan Muna's accusation. "First the military does not maintain a death squad," he said. "That's a rebellious group out without any shade of truth. The murder was an ordinary criminal incident," Bonecaut said.

At least four activists were killed in Quezon last year.

The victim's wife, Jessie, and the suspects arrived at their doorstep looking for her husband.

"When they saw my husband in the kitchen, the killers shouted his name and called him 'Putang Tinga Sonate'. They shot and stabbed him in front of our son, Jake," said the grieving wife, who is pregnant with their fifth child.

The victim's neighbors said the suspects had been asking for Almasen two weeks ago. According to Bonin, the victim was no longer active in the activist movement.

He and her husband may seeming in a commercial fishing boat.

"Why would they still kill him? What will happen now to us," she said in tears. (With a Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau)

THE FAMILY of the slain Bayan Muna leader are now left on their own.

Javier slay convicts brought to Muntinlupa

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—Six prisoners convicted in the murder of former Antique Gov. Evelio Javier were transferred yesterday from the Antique provincial jail to the national penitentiary in Muntinlupa.

Lawyer Avelino "Bob" Javellana, former Commissioner Captain John Bulig, Nicolas Nogalida, Roman Bautista, Benny Gelacio and Ernesto Idanan left the port of Antique aboard the BFP Bluesea 3 before noon in a van along with 14 other convicted prisoners and 15 jail guards. They were supposed to arrive in Manila early today.

One of them surrendered, Henry Segarra, remained at the provincial jail after he earlier applied for parole before the Antique Halcon and Probation Office.

He has been detained for 16 years and was eligible for parole because he has served more than the minimum sentence ordered by the court.

Another convict, Rolando Javellana, remained at large after he escaped from the Iloilo Rehabilitation Center on October 2002.

The transfer was implemented nearly four months after the Antique Regional Trial Court sentenced all those convicted to reclusion perpetua (minimum of 20 years and one day to 40 years imprisonment) for the killing of Javier on Feb. 11, 1986. Segarra was sentenced from six to 14 years in jail.

Javier's son Evalon Gideon welcomed the transfer. "It's been more than three months and I thought they were not going to leave (the Antique jail)," Gideon said in a telephone interview.

Except for Segarra, those convicted were also found guilty of the double murder of Nicholas Barve and attempted murder of Divina Bernardo, Blanca Acado, Bernabe Balcedo, and Marianne Calderon.

They were each sentenced to a minimum of nine years in a maximum of 17 years for frustrated murder and a minimum of three years to a maximum of nine years for each of the four counts of attempted murder. They were also ordered to pay P600,000.00 in damages to the victim's heirs.

Former assemblyman Bruno Bellosillo, the alleged mastermind in the killing of Javier and three others were acquitted. Bellosillo was among those who were off the six convicts at the port yesterday.

Antique Gov. Salvacion Lisbine-Perez ordered the immediate transfer of the six convicts after Idanan was seen last month in Pototan, Iloilo. On instructions of Judge Shady Contreras of the Antique RTC Branch 12 who presided over the latest murder case.

Idanan was allegedly looking for assassins to kill Contreras. He, however, denied the allegation and insisted that he was inside the jail at the Bilazon on 1986 to the capital town of San Jose when he was reportedly seen in Pototan on Dec. 29 last year.

"I feel bad about my transfer because we were apparently singled out," Javellana told the Inquirer in a telephone interview.

He said 40 other prisoners scheduled two years ahead of them were scheduled to be transferred.

Javellana maintained his innocence in Javier's murder. "Judge Contreras was wrong and I'll try to prove that to the Court of Appeals."

Batangas steel firm reopens after Balayan court issues TRO

By Mel Magsino-Lubit
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

BALAYAN, Batangas—After securing a temporary restraining order (TRO) from a Balayan court, Steel Corp. of the Philippines (Steelcorp) in Barangay Munting Indang here was ordered to operate again last Friday.

This, after the firm was ordered to shut down all operations following the closure orders issued by the municipal government on Jan. 25, when Steelcorp failed to pay the mayor's permit to operate in the town.

The TRO issued by Balayan Regional Trial Court Branch 9 Judge Elsa Thadeo also ordered the company to start operating on Friday.

"But, Steelcorp didn't shut down after its management received the closure order on Jan. 25," Balayan mayor Eleuterio Martinez said. "The company had to wait for about three days before starting down because they had already run out of raw materials."

According to Martinez, the TRO lost the municipal government since it was supposed to be running after a fire with a record of millions in unpaid realestate taxes.

"But it's the judge's decision and that's something we can't control," Martinez added. "So, I have no choice but to lift the closure order today."

Steelcorp, which has been producing galvanized and pre-painted sheets and breathing lines operating since 1999, has unpaid real property taxes amounting to P80 million.

The unpaid taxes, according to the composition of the Balayan treasurer's office, accumulated from the balances of real property taxes on Steelcorp's machinery and equipment since the first quarter of 2000.

Although Steelcorp has been granted 50 percent tax rates on the machinery and equipment, the amount the company has paid is not sufficient, as it has only settled the taxes based on the acquisition cost of the property, not the prevailing cost.

In 1997, Steelcorp acquired its machinery and equipment and had them installed in 1998 at the Balayan plant.

A ruling of the Bureau of Local Government Finance under the Department of Finance dated Feb. 2, 2000 said the properties should be based on the acquisition cost at that time, converted at the average can prevailing then.

But Steelcorp still paid its taxes based on the acquisition cost.

Since then, the provincial government has been demanding the Steelcorp to pay its taxes.

Warrants of levy and auction have been issued by the provincial government to Steelcorp but still it didn't pay its dues.

Finally a 20-day ultimatum on Sept. 17, 2004 was issued to the company here for failure of its machinery and equipment.

The case was fought in court last year and the Steelcorp lost.

Stay away from ancestral lands, groups warn mining companies

BAGUIO CITY—The militant Cordillera Peoples Alliance has warned mining companies to keep off the ancestral lands of indigenous communities in the region following a Supreme Court ruling that upheld foreign stake in mining operations in the country.

"Mineral commodities will meet you with their weight and will fight back if the government and mining companies will insist on opening up their lands to corporate mining. These will be their graveyards, mass destructions and resistance on the ground," said Jose Luring, CPA chair.

"The country will become a battleground against the plunder of the people's resources," the said.

On Feb. 6, the Supreme Court dismissed with finality a motion asking the tribunal to reverse its ruling last December allowing foreign mining firms to exploit the country's natural resources.

Carling said the protests would intensify because the government had already started to lure foreign mining companies to invest in the country after the court upheld the constitutionality of the Philippine Mining Act of 1995.

"The legitimacy, integrity and fairness of the Supreme Court is now under question. The people who [would] suffer from this decision will never forget this injustice," the said.

Communities rebels operating in the Cordillera said they would support moves to stop mining operations in the region.

"Most mining operations would spell disasters for the indigenous peoples in the coming days ... We are committed more than ever to defend the people who oppose the entry of large scale mining in their lands," said Ka Filbe, spokesperson of the Cordillera People's Democratic Power, a regional political arm of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDF).

"We are strengthening the political campaigns against mining and massive logging through education for affected communities. But if the government responds by sending more soldiers to affected villages, then [that] will be the time to launch our attacks," he said.

In Filoe said they were closely monitoring Bloemkopen Benguet and several areas in Abra, Mt. Province and Ifulugo where "military visibility has been heightened."

Lt. Col. Peter Muzzi, spokesperson of the military's Northern Luzon Command (Nolcom), said they had yet to receive a directive from top military officials to increase troop strength in Cordillera villages with mineral exploration permit applications.

"I think [the commander] is not only using the mayor [side of the issue]. [They are] trying to paint a bad picture of the government [due to its] support for the mining industry," Muzzi said.

'Lumad' resistance

In Kidapawan City, the lumad group La Bugal B'laan Tribal Association said it was not abandoning its fight against the entry of foreign mining firms into the country, even with the Supreme Court's recent decision, which crushed the motion for reconsideration filed by the lumad (indigenous people) group La Bugal B'laan Tribal Association against the Mining act of 1995.

"The fight is not yet over," said lawyer Marvic Leonen of the Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center, Inc.–Kasama sa Kalikasan (LRC-KSK) Friends of the Earth-Philippines). Leonen is the lumad group's legal counsel.

"It is the Supreme Court's decision but this is not one of the issues that we can raise," Leonen told radio dzRH).

In a statement, Leonen's group said that in a span of 12 days and without even asking mining companies and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to respond, the Supreme Court unjustly dropped the motion for reconsideration filed by the lumad group.

"The decision saddened and surprised us because there was not a chance for this to be argued in the Supreme Court. They decided on the motion for reconsideration without the other camp answering it," Leonen said.

The decision, he said, was a "blatant overreaction," which allegedly means it was not a full decision.

"They said that nothing would happen if the issue [was] argued upon again because they could see no new issue being raised," Leonen said.

The tribunal's decision contended that its arguments raised in the motion filed by the tribal group were already resolved in its earlier decision.

No news item that would warrant a reconsideration of the decision was raised, the Supreme Court said.

But Leonen said their motion contained new issues.

He said they questioned how Sagittarius Mines, a company with a P30-million capitalization, was allowed to operate a 37032-million-worth of mining project in 30,000 hectares of land.

"The Supreme Court refused to see the new issues. It has not passed upon all the issues that the petitioners raised. The petition, we were not given a chance," Leonen said. *Jeanne Galace, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau and Ayi Bye Tupas, PDI Abscbnnews Bureaus*

Suspected smuggled pebbles seized

ARIPAO, Nueva Vizcaya—Environment personnel here have seized three truckloads of white pebbles believed smuggled from an island town in Cagayan.

Roberto Agaja, provincial environment officer, said the cargoes of white pebbles were seized after two of the trucks tried to slip past a checkpoint of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Barangay Calaocboc here.

Section 92 of the Fisheries Code bans the sale, or export of pebbles and any other substances which make up any marine habitat.

Records from the shippers showed that a permit to transport was issued by Cagayan Sen. Edgar Lara, while the certificate of origin was issued by Calayan Mayor Joseph Llopis.

The sacks of white pebbles, which are an internal volume of 54 cubic meters, were taken from Barangay Dadao in the island town of Calayan, records showed.

The permit holder included Nestor Escalante and Evangeline Llopis, reportedly relatives of the Calayan mayor.

Local environment officials, who asked not to be named, said the Mines and Geosciences Bureau was the authorized agency that should have issued permits covering the transport of minerals, such as white pebbles.

DENR sources said a government official had requested the release of the shipment "for humanitarian considerations." The official, according to the sources, said the shipment was owned by villagers in Calayan who depend on collecting pebbles for their livelihood.

The trucks were released on Wednesday afternoon, on orders of Amynel Mangisong, MGB regional director, reports said.

Calayan (pop. 14,000) is a small island off the northeastern tip of Luzon and Cagayan province. It belongs to the Babuyan group of islands.

Environment groups earlier expressed alarm over the reported commercial collection of white pebbles in the area, which they said, might create ecological imbalance in the island.

The pebbles, more popularly known as Cantaan pebbles, are reportedly in demand among construction firms.

Lara, however, said the shipment was in order as the required documents had been scrutinized by the provincial mining regulatory board before the application was submitted for his approval.

"[The shipment] was initially questioned by the DENR because of report on deficiencies in their [shipping] documents. There were indications that in one permit, the document issued by the mayor stated to have been dumped [with]," Lara told the bureau.

"So we had to require the owners to secure the original copies so we can see the deatils," he said.

Lara denied that the collection of pebbles in Babuyan Islands has gone up to a commercial scale. "But still, we make sure that [quarrying activities in the islands] are regulated," he said. *Melvin Gascon, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Dad wants cell phones banned in classrooms

BOHOL CITY—A provincial board member wants to ban cellular phones inside the classrooms for fear that these might distract the students.

In a privilege speech during the day's session, board member Abel Montero said a spy instrument the phone would ring due to an incoming message or call, disrupting the classes.

Montero cited the recent National Achievement Tests by senior high school students where the top three schools were from the rural areas.

The top 10 schools were provincial schools, edging out the high schools from the oldest and even the National Capital Region.

He said studies seem to show that in the recent High School Readiness Test.

He noted that distracted pace in the learning process of students in the cities hampered their mental, social and educational development.

Felipe Calvin, PDI Diagonal Bureau

Reds officiate first gay marriage in NPA

GAY comrades, Ka Andres and Ka Jose, are wed in an undisclosed area in Davao

help-of-outsider and the unseen.

Andres held a bolo, as did Jose and each other's hands. The bullets represented their "commitment to the armed struggle."

Throughout the ceremony, a shot serenaded them with revolutionary love songs. After they signed their "wedding contract," the newlyweds kissed amid the loud applause.

Jose recalled the day he first entered the NPA camp for his revolutionary integration—a practice resorted to by city-based revolutionary armies before their deployment in the countryside. This was the first time he met Andres, who was preparing audio-visual materials for a basic revolutionary education seminar.

Jose was young and had a crush. Andres reminds and thought Andres was a typical tigasing boys (cold guy), an object of men's and attitude.

Andres, an education instructor in the movement, was busy with his work and did not take too much notice of Jose.

Besides, Andres already had a boyfriend. Later, the two started to discuss politics.

"I began to understand the revolution and why gays are discriminated by society," Jose said in an interview.

Started as friends

When Jose's integration program ended, he decided to join the NPA. It was Andres who accompanied him to the armed unit—his first assignment.

They met several times during education training, in the end, it was purely a comradely interaction. Later, it became romantic.

"I realized he was caring and understanding (sobrang maunawain). He would never leave me in times of difficulty," Jose said.

Andres recalled when they both got acquainted from their comrades on their way to get supplies. It was raining and Andres spent the night alone in the forest without provisions. The following day, he ran into Jose, who had also spent the night in the woods, looking for him.

'Sweetheart'

Jose since confided to Andres that sometimes, he would find himself annoyed to female comrades.

"I don't get jealous. Even if we are away from each other for months because of the nature of our respective works, I trust him," Andres said.

Neither is their age gap an issue. Jose is 27, while Andres is 54. They call each other "sweetheart."

"Andres helps me overcome the challenges and to become strong politically and ideologically," Jose said.

When the couple realized they were falling in love, they immediately sought the approval of their respective "collective" or unit.

It is the collective's responsibility to foster a strong relationship within the group and members are assessed every four months.

First gay marriage

As the first same-sex marriage in the NPA, theirs is a union long awaited by comrades who support gay rights in the movement. It is also a manifestation of the communist movement's recognition of the right to engage in gay relations and in unity.

Although the CPP already recognized gay relations and same-sex marriage, it was not easy for Andres and Jose to make the decision to finally marry.

First, the couple worked hard to change the traditional mind-set of some comrades regarding gays and gay relationships. They still denied those issues to the prevailing "patriarchal" culture in Philippine society.

On gay relations

"[We] conducted painstaking discussions to make comrades understand gay relations and gay rights," Andres said.

"Our unity adheres to the strong party discipline. They enhance the potential of gays in the movement. This has gained positive results through the years. Comrades [both activists and cadres] from the masses have learned to respect and recognize gays and their contribution to the revolution," he said.

As early as 1995, the CPP's Southern Mindanao Regional Party Committee started to discuss gay rights in the movement.

In 1998, a provision on gay relations and same-sex marriage was added to the CPP's guiding policy on relations contained in a document titled "On the Proletarian Relationship of Intercadres (OPRIC)."

Under the OPRIC, the communist movement is committed to guide and ensure there is no exploitation in any relationship—heterosexual or homosexual.

What about kids?

During the wedding ceremony, comrades asked Jose—in jest—if Andres could sexually satisfy him.

"If there is love, everything follows, including sexual satisfaction," Jose explained.

The couple who also asked if they planned to have kids.

The newlyweds said they would deal with the issue later.

"What we have to do now... with the help of the Party—is to work on our marriage and to be strong while serving the people," Jose said.

Pre-need firm . . .

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consumer committee, said in a statement.

Three Senate committees, including the one chaired by Senate, are holding hearings about GAP's business following reports that colleges and universities have refused to honor GAP-issued checks after several checks bounced.

GAP is the country's biggest pre-need company with more than 700,000 plan holders. Last year, the Securities and Exchange Commission suspended the firm's license to sell educational plans after it incurred a deficiency in its trust fund.

A trust fund deficiency puts in doubt the ability of a pre-need company to pay benefits to plan holders in the future.

Companies that provide education, pension and life plans are required to put aside funds because they prepare for the needs of their clients at a specific period in the future.

Roxas said that if GAP was "to be patronize and public entrust as performed in the info," then the pre-need firm should immediately address its "massive trust fund and capital deficiencies."

At the Senate committee hearing on GAP's financial problems last week, the SEC disclosed that as of October last year, GAP had issued P5.49 million worth of checks that were not honored by banks for insufficiency of funds.

GAP president Enrique Imperial, however, said the pre-need firm had already funded most of the checks and that P48 million remained to be settled.

CAP checks rejected

Roxas said in his statement that 23 schools in Metro Manila had stopped accepting GAP checks.

The schools, according to a SEC report dated Nov. 25, 2004, were the Eastern University, Centro Escolar University, San Juan de Dios, Miriam College, Assumption College, University of the Visayas, Manila Central University, New Era University, Don Bosco University,

St. Paul's College-Manila, Lyceum University, Perpetual Help College, St. Jude's College and Hospital, La Salle Intramuros, Holy Spirit University, Philippine School of Business Administration, Manila Diaries University, National College of Business Administration, Makati Medical Center School, Philippine Accounting and Technological School, Assumption College, San Beda University and Ateneo.

Roxas has filed a bill that seeks to establish a special protection fund that will compensate plan holders in the event of insolvency of a pre-need company.

Protection fund

Under Senate Bill No. 1898, plan holders of a bankrupt pre-need firm may claim up to P100,000 each from a Plan Holders Protection Fund (PPF), which shall pay all claims within six months from date of filing.

As revenue, plan holders have no means of recovering their investment in case a pre-need firm collapses, according to Roxas.

The senator sought to address the problem through the creation of the PPF, much in the same way the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp. extends protection to bank depositors.

Under SBC 1898, a pre-need company must set aside a portion of the premiums or payments collected from plan holders to build up the trust fund, considered a critical component of the mechanism designed to guarantee the capacity of the pre-need plans firm to meet its future obligations to plan holders.

The pre-need industry has P66 billion in trust funds and some four million plan holders, according to Sen. Edgardo Angara, chair of the banks committee.

Pre-need Code

In a statement, Angara said a pre-need Code would have to be drawn up to protect plan holders.

"The pre-need industry takes care of public money," he said. "It is the priority agenda of Congress to safeguard public money through a strong regulatory framework that will also allow the industry to breathe, thrive and realize its full potentials."

For his part, Sen. Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr. said the government should work to help find a solution to the liquidity problems of GAP.

"There is already so much confusion and accusations by different parties on the matter of GAP's current financial woes," Revilla said in a statement.

He said the confusion was "not healthy for the plan holders and the pre-need industry." *Reports from Christine O. Avendaño and Felipe V. Celino, INQ Davao bureau*

Switzerland now stricter with 'dirty money'

By Inquirer Bureau
Publisher

ZURICH—Switzerland is now stricter with the alleged ill-gotten wealth of corrupt dictators and presidents, Dr. Franz Blankart, former secretary of state of Switzerland, said at a recent briefing for a group of Asian editors and publishers.

He said a special law was passed almost seven years ago that makes it impossible for "black money" to be stashed away in Swiss banks.

First, he said, "you have to prove who the real owners of the money is." Then, he added, "you (the person who wants to deposit money) should prove where you are."

"It is definitely now [since the passage of the special law] to bring 'dirty money' into Switzerland," Blankart said. "If we find 'black money' it shows that our controls are working."

After the passage of the new law, Switzerland was the favorite haven for the ill-gotten wealth of corrupt dictators, presidents and other heads of government because of its strict bank secrecy laws.

Mr. Yik Fabe Kiey, member of the Council of States and a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, for his part said the Swiss government had not changed its policy on the recovery of the alleged ill-gotten wealth of dictators deposited in Swiss banks, and current recovery efforts will have to continue to go through various legal process.

Nobert Seiler said that all the alleged ill-gotten funds were "blocked" and this law would have to be followed to secure them and turn them over to the government now claiming them.

Blankart and Fabe Kiey delivered their remarks after a "post Davos" dinner tendered in honor of 14 Asian editors and publishers who had attended the 2005 Annual Meeting of the World Economic Meeting. The dinner was given by Roldan, a Swiss cement manufacturer that has plants all over the world, including the Philippines.

So far, the Presidential Commission on Good Government has recovered $660 million of the Marcos deposits in Swiss banks. The funds are being held in escrow in the Philippine National Bank.

In 1999 the Swiss Federal court ruled that $356 million in deposits, which had grown to $681 million with interest, that the Marcoses had stashed away in Swiss banks were ill-gotten.

Montreux, an Australian website, said in its file on Marcos that his Swiss bank accounts were estimated to contain between US$5 billion and US$15 billion "stolen from his country."

The Business Book of Records, 1999, edition, said that "the total [of the Marcos ill-gotten wealth] since November 1986 was believed to be $5–$10 billion."

Sergio Gabriele, a Swiss lawyer hired by the PCGG to recover the ill-gotten wealth of the Marcos family said he believed the Philippine government had not examined the outlines of the Marcos wealth.

In an interview in 2003, he said the document revealed that the money well.

"Maybe they don't even know where the money is," he said, referring to Marcos' heirs.

Thai leader Thaksin wins bigger mandate

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through the ballot box, all but conceded defeat before the election but had hoped to limit his opposition landslide victory by scoring at least enough seats to launch revisions of its constitution.

Early exit polls showed their hopes had been dashed. One poll showed that Thaksin's ruling Thai Rak Thai, or Thai Love Thai, party may have captured as many as 399 out of the 500 parliamentary seats up for grabs. Another gave him 340 seats.

Disabled results were not expected until late Sunday and the spokesperson for Thaksin's party, Somsamlu Wiggins, said he would make no comments until the count was in.

The leader of the main opposition Democrat party, Banyat Bantadtan, appeared resigned to a defeat.

"It is I seen out that way (as the polls say), today we will have to congratulate Thai Rak Thai party and have surrendered. They will have been able to establish a one-party government with a flood of votes," he said, meaning other opposition parties to join him to act as a check on the new government.

Thaksin joined his wife and three children at the end of the polling station. "I want the public to give importance to the most democracy which is a matter of taking part on election day," the prime minister said.

The Election Commission conceded over the weekend that the campaign had been riddled with corruption but said it was difficult to catch violators red-handed. An earlier poll estimated that 3.5 billion baht (US$840 million, euro664 million) had been doled out to buy votes.

A high turnout was expected among the country's 44.8 million eligible voters, possibly eclipsing the 69.9 percent in the last general election in January 2001.

Twenty parties fielded 2,289 candidates, but only four or five parties were expected to win seats in the 500-member House of Representatives.

The party that Thaksin created—that Thai Thai—won 248 seats in its 2001 election debut, and had aimed to capture more than 550 this time.

Thaksin came under fire late year for alleged cronyism, inept handling of the bird flu outbreak and failure to curb sectarian violence in Thailand's Muslim-dominated south. His intransigence over the latter caused concern.

But his road was in the Nov. 26 insurgent was quick and effective, leading to the arrest with dismissive in row, locking orders and consoling survivors. Civilian abuse his failings was most swept off the front pages.

Villagers in the southern province lined up to vote at polling booths, often within sight of where their homes once stood and now dead family members lived.

"It's important to choose the government because the government is our last resort," said Jam Rawhalae, a 55-year-old fisherman whose boat and home were demolished by the killer waves. "Water nothing left. The new company would be the only help."

Nearly 3,400 people are confirmed to have died when the tsunami thrashed parts of southern Thailand. Another 1,100 people are still missing and hundreds are living in makeshift camps, those which voters were transported to polling booths.

In Thailand's southern province of Pattani, a 66-year-old Muslim woman said she was voting for peace in a region where more than 800 people were killed last year in the escalating insurgency.

"I hope my vote will make everyone cry, crossed reader that we have democracy, that we are not evident," Jarmeh Benkalun said.

Helicopters and some 30,000 troops guarded polls in the south. No violence was reported, but protesters burned Thaksin campaign posters.

Thaksin, 54, is a self-made telecom millionaire who rode to victory four years ago on public disenchantment with the slow pace of recovery from Thailand's 1997 financial crisis. His vast personal fortune was a key advantage in forging a nationwide political network.

Populist initiatives delivering benefits such as affordable health care earned him the support of Thailand's rural majority. AP

Even PNP camps suffer from population boom

Turn to page A11

officers and personnel—and their numbers are growing each year...many more had themselves without headquarters to stay in.

The PNP is virtually running out of spaces for officers who should be staying inside camps, eventually to hold the last vehicle-controlled unit in the field, according to Chief Supt. Francisco Llamas, Engineering Service director.

"Ideally, at least 5 percent of the population should be housed inside camps," he said in an interview. "These are supposed to be the key officers, like heads of operations."

But with only 1,000 spaces available supposedly, around 6,500 officers are practically "homeless," if not "squatting" inside police camps.

"The problem is clear—we have very little spaces we are have to go around, not increase," said Llamas said. "It has to be condominium, not bungalow."

That means the PNP needs to construct additional floors atop existing buildings and even new structures in whatever limited space is left, he said.

Camp Crame, the PNP's main headquarters, alone has at least 200 "squatting" police officers, owing to the lack of available spaces inside the sprawling compound, the Inquirer has learned.

There are a total of 1,040 policemen living in 138 camps nationwide. At least 280 of them are staying in Crame, according to the Engineering Service.

Cmdr. Rogelio Diwa, headquarters of the Regional Capital Region Police Office in Taguig, offers very little help since it is similarly congested, Llamas explained.

Besides regular police officers, it also houses a detention facility for suspected terrorists and other high-profile suspects.

Bagong Diwa also has the Center for the U.N. Inmates Rehabilitation of Drug Dependents, the PNP's rehabilitation facility.

Last December, the PNP held the groundbreaking for its P200-million condominium compound, a Crame-based project evaluation. It for the first soldiers, or those ranked from PO1 to SPO4.

Generals and other top officers can't move to their way to—their own property in already villages, anyway, top officials have told nonofficers.

The PNP has already received bidders for the condominium compound that will consist of four five-story buildings to be located near the (Turn to Page 2)

"The idea is to give decent houses to noncommissioned officers because they are less fortunate," Chief Supt. Nerel Ediog, chief of the PNP Engineering Service's construction and repair division, said in an interview.

The area was previously barren, strewn with some 50 families of nonofficers, unoccupied houses they had built and expanded over the years, said Llamas.

Since they will be displaced by the project, they will most likely be given priority among the hundreds of nonofficers currently based in Crame, Ediog said.

Llamas said screening would be very strict. Occupants will be chosen based on their positions, seniority and the need for them to stay in the headquarters.

Those who already own property in Bagong—courtesy of the Home Guarantee and Development Authority—will automatically be disqualified, the official said.

The floor design and location of the housing project is not to scale since many buildings.

Future new homes

Each 35-square-meter unit will have two bedrooms and built-in cabinets. There will be cage-type laundry areas on the roof deck, the floor in popular condominiums.

The compound will also have parking spaces and a playground.

All these will cost a policeman only his monthly quarters allowance of around P500, Llamas said.

PNP Director General Edgar Aglipay has already hired some P80 million for the first of four buildings mostly around P75 million. It is scheduled to be completed within the year.

The budget came from interest receipts on the PNP Civil Security Group's collection of fees from gun permits and license to operate security agencies.

The three remaining buildings will have to wait until the PNP generates another hefty budget, Llamas said.

Plan to oust Edong ...

Turn to page A11

with the administration and did not directly name Angara as a target of the exposed purge, although the senator remained the subject of the bayonet interview.

Dedel on plunder charges but still acknowledged as the foremost team of the Arroyo administration, Estrada has declared he will personally lead moves to unite the mainstream political opposition following its split between the Pwersa ng Lakan camps in the May 2004 presidential election.

Estrada made this note upon his return to the country has last month after a successful knee surgery in Hong Kong.

The lion roars to flatten Manobo lands

(Turn to page A1)

nearby Mamang town.

"No police officer ever came to see me to investigate," he said.

Surigaldo, the local police blotter had the Binadoco identified as the assailants, with the bullet shells on the bulldozer presented as evidence. The tribe had to submit its own formal "open report" to amend the information.

About 20 men were reportedly involved in the shooting. Three of the attackers have been identified as Bruno Miranda, Pato Miranda and Babie Balejo, but no arrests have been made so far.

Land clearing 'legal'

"The bulldozing is legal," says Lito Hinandeng, head of the Buklidnon People Drawn Agrarian Reform Organization (BPDARO). She showed photocopies of the certificates of land ownership award (CLOA) issued to her group for 61 hectares of land the Binadocos had seized.

The BPDARO is one of at least six groups that had applied for CLOAs covering 2,691 ha of land that was once owned by Buklidnon Farms Inc. (BFI). The company is owned by tycoon Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco.

Issuance of land titles covering ancestral lands has always been easy, especially for the moneyed and the powerful, according to an outsider from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Some have never even set foot on the land titled to them.

This situation has been, of course, disadvantageous to tribal members who know nothing about paper titles and who could only cling on to an unwritten history of affinity to their territory.

"We have so many cases of farm lands that were titled. Right now that is our headache. Look, even the bank of the (Manybubo) capitol building: why was it titled in 1954? That's a big question," said Stefano Epic, DENR senior forest management specialist, when asked about the complaint of another Manobo tribe whose land was titled to an influential family of Spanish descent.

"It's not only happening here (in Buklidnon), but throughout the country. They (title beneficiaries) must have some connection or, during that time, it could be money talks," Epic added.

Marcos cronies

During the Marcos regime in the '70s, Construction Development Corp. of the Philippines, which was owned by the dictator's crony Rodolfo Cuenca, allegedly took over those titles covering Manobo ancestral lands and "expanded by hews to roughly 4,000 hectares," says Omar Jesús Amanes, another land claimant.

The CDCP operations was entered by massive corruption, Amanes observed, leading to its downfall and takeover by Cojuangco. Eventually the entire area became the subject of one of the country's largest land reform kickbacks after Cuenca donated an armed the presidency in 1986 and ordered the expropriation of all Manobo (government) corporations throughout the country.

But Aquino's land reform program went astray in Buklidnon's Manobo territory. Former BFI employees were awarded those hectares each during the land distribution.

"Why were they given priority when most of them are not actual residents here? Besides, they have been paid their wages and benefits as employees," complained a Manobo chieftain, who is one of the ancestral land claimants.

The entire area was for distribution to landless residents of the municipality and the province. Many tribe members who disagreed with the amortization scheme started in the Cloa did not apply. "Why must we pay something that are originally ours but was fraudulently taken away from us?" argued Datu Bernardo Cal-om.

A BULLDOZER takes a run after clearing farm planted to corn, cassava and other root crops in an area claimed by Manobo villagers as ancestral domain.

REX Lariada, one of the four villagers shot during the Dec. 22 land-clearing operations, recalls the incident from his hospital bed.

A MEMBER of the provincial wildlife force in Buklidnon checks his high-powered firearm for a possible "confrontation" with guerrillas believed to be encroaching on Manobo land.

Other tribe members who nonetheless went to the local office of the Department of Agrarian Reform to apply for Cloas claimed they were driven away. Out of almost 200 Manobo applicants, only 64 were allocated 20 ha of land outside the titled areas.

Meddling politicians

Buklidnon who wanted to build a base of supporters in the area were behind several awardees in the list of land reform beneficiaries, the tribal members said. "Professional" squatters from other provinces, at times accompanied by armed fanatical rebs, also came in, they said.

"Those who have guns, those who are brave enough to occupy, those who have connections—it is they who will benefit from the land," Amanes said in Filipino.

"Military commanders assigned locally gave also given parcels of land to ensure security," he added.

Amanes himself has the connection. He claims to be a surrendering member of the Central Committee of Red Mindoro's Moro National Liberation Front.

"Manud helped in the re-screening and recommended hectares of Cloas to our group in 1999," revealed Amanes, who finally the claim for 200 ha of land reform area that was once dubbed Buklidnon's "killing fields."

The ostensible peace and order condition made it difficult for Cloa holders to occupy the area awarded to them or to pay mortization. Tribal members who have nowhere else to go stuck to what they assert as their and cultivated the land for survival.

But unlike Amanes and Hinandeng, who possess photocopies of Cloas, the Manobo do not have any paper to show proof of ownership. Thus, the bulldozers came in to clear the land for a new crop to be introduced—pineapple—under a joint venture arrangement.

Land conversion

A DAR administrative order allows the conversion of a land reform area into a joint venture, such as a pineapple plantation, according to the department's provincial officer, Julio Celestiano.

Gov. Jose Ma. Dalisi was supportive of the idea. Last Sept. 28, the provincial legislative body passed a resolution endorsed by Celestiano, calling for the speedy release of Cloas to identified beneficiaries.

The 15-year joint venture agreement between Davao Agricultural Ventures Corp. (DAVCO) and Cloa holders belonging to the umbrella Nagkahiusang Mag-uuma Primary Multi-purpose Cooperative (NAMMPC), which is headed by Amanes.

Davco has already advanced the payment of land rental, equivalent to P15,000 per hectare per year, for four years. Another P15,000 was added as compensation for crop damage caused by bulldozing activities as part of land preparation for the planting of pineapple.

Davco's chair and president is Rodolfo del Rosario, a former governor of Davao del Norte and listed as Mindanao's wealthiest politician based on the 2002 Inventory of Assets, Liabilities and Net Worth filed with the Bureau of Internal Revenue.

A phone call to the Davco office in Davao City confirmed the partnership. Davco is to produce pineapple under the label Vicsarb-ero Fresh Produce.[1] The giant Del Monte Corp. will take care of marketing abroad.

NCIP: Cloas 'illegal'

Davco has already signed the agreement for Cloas covering more than 100 ha of land, Amanes revealed. The company would have already paid some P15 million in advance payment of land rental to its members' cooperative.

While the joint venture is presumed to be legal, it is the current rush to issue Cloas that is deemed questionable, according to Buklidnon Benito Lingating, chair of the Ancestral Committee for Indigenous Peoples (ACIP).

On Oct. 29, 2003, the NCIP and the DAR issued a joint memorandum circular for the "temporary suspension of land acquisition and distribution, and ancestral domain/ancestral land titling activities in connection areas."

In an interview through his mobile phone, Lingating asserted that the circular was "still in effect" and that the Cloas that were issued after its issuance, such as those of Matandog's group, were considered illegal.

But DAR provincial officer Celestiano asserted that the circular did not cover the 405 area after he had consulted with lawyers. The documents had been prepared for qualified beneficiaries long before the order was issued, he argued.

"[The] DAR must show us the list of beneficiaries or post it in public places for the entire population to know and determine if those listed are genuinely qualified," Manobo leaders pleaded.

Easier said than done

The demand appeared to be easier said than done. Last Sept. 28, or eight days before the provincial board endorsed the speedy release of the Cloas, Celestiano issued a memorandum instructing strict control on the availability of vital documents and official records related to the area.

"Agano nga gimakwera mga ang splayd nga bulldozer diotro sa mga hengdayan (Why is the supposedly official) list of beneficiaries being kept secret?" the Manobo leaders asked.

The bulldozer continues to root and flatten crops that help sustain the tribe in favor of one that is intended for export. While each year may be sweet years to Cloa beneficiaries—real or unreal—who stand in extensive land vistas from the joint venture, it is not to a people who continue to be disenfranchised.

"Sud sa ang kon, maguey sa gud ni (The lion has gotten mine, this spoils much for us)," the old Manobo woman murmured, as she looked at the approaching armored equipment.

Matandog denied that the BPARO was involved in the Dec. 22 shooting of the Manobo residents.

"It was 12 who were attacked," the alleged, allowing anyone's allegation made on the bulldozer. She threatened to file criminal cases against tribe members, including those wounded and hospitalized.

'Show of force'

A few days before New Year's Day, a team belonging to the provincial police mobile force arrived. They were responding to an urgent plea by tribe members to halt the bulldozing activities. The land farm vigilored again moving toward their direction.

Upon learning that the police was around, the team summoned more policemen, one of them armed with a 38 cal. firearm.

The arrival of police reinforcements turned out to be a "show of force," according to the residents.

As if the members and heroics needed the area where the armed men were believed to be hiding, their civilian guides were ordered to stay put.

The law enforcers moved a few steps more. To everyone's surprise, they walked opposite the bearing pointed to them by the tribe. No one ever came back to apprise the community of developments.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2005 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER B1

BUSINESS

Edna Rizal D. Mariano
Assistant Editor Connie S. Martinez

Honda seen putting up ₱1.3-B bike plant

By Bernard M. Domingo

MOTORCYCLE maker Honda Philippines Inc. is planning to invest P1.3 billion in a new production facility that will jack up the company's capacity and allow it to corner a bigger share of the growing market for bikes.

According to an industry source, HPI is considering putting up the planned assembly plant in Batangas City, Batangas province, which is its Pandayan City has the capacity to produce up to 150,000 units of motorcycles.

Company data show that as of April 2004, the Pandayan plant has reached a cumulative production of 600,000 units.

The source, however, did not say how much the planned facility would add to HPI's current capacity.

He said HPI wanted to expand its capacity in view of industry projections that demand for the low-wheeler would hit at least a million units by 2010.

HPI, which started operations in 1983, also plans to export a portion of the motorcycles it is making in the country, the source said.

Industry data show that local motorcycle sales combined a total of 581,450 units in 2004 or 41 percent higher than the 333,981 units sold in 2003.

The motor-class expected growth rate was attributed to the strong demand for alternative modes of transportation amid rising costs of fuel.

Last year, Japanese bikes accounted for 79 percent of total sales with 334,981 units while 147,449 units of non-Japanese models were sold.

HPI accounted for 40 percent of the market, selling 203,411 units in 2004.

Among the Japanese brands, Kawasaki ranked second with 11 percent of the market or 51,762 units. Yamaha was third with 10.5 percent or 53,875 units; and Suzuki was fourth with 8.3 percent or 42,753 units.

Industry players forecast motorcycle sales to reach between 585,000 and 621,000 units this year. The motorcycle market growth of between 30 percent and 35 percent.

Under the ongoing investment priorities Plan, the required minimum outlay for a motorcycle production business to qualify for pioneer status was set at ₱4 million (about ₱320 million) and exports of at 30,000 completely built-units a year.

The IPP's specific guidelines allow such investments to include the acquisition of existing assets or facilities, but there is also the requirement for the same project to export at least 30,000 motorbike units a year.

Pioneer status affords beneficiaries investors such as exemption on import duties for capital equipment and tax holidays.

According to the Board of Investments, the minimum requirements aimed to to entice big investors to do business in the country and at the same time encourage modernization of existing projects.

Stock market seen to resume rally

THE STOCK market is seen to bounce out from corporate earnings like week to the absence of any major developments, analysts said.

They say that the recent weakness in stock prices was temporary and that the market is likely to continue its bull run in the long run.

The main index took a positive last week, shedding 19 points or less than 1 percent to 1,886.67 last week.

SPI Trade said in a weekly report that the market selling was spread across the sectors with such as Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., Bank of the Philippine Islands, Philippine National Bank, Ayala Land Corp., Manila Electric Co. (MER-CBW) Broadcasting Corp., San Miguel Corp., JG Summit Holdings, Digital Telecommunications, Petron Corp., DMCI Holdings, SM Prime Holdings, Lopez's Consolidated Mining, Benpres Holdings, Metro Pacific and Belle Corp.

"The market established a new high in nearly five years last Monday, but investors took profits in the following days to take advantage of higher prices as many feel the market is overbought," SPI Trade said last report.

Banks were the quickest to report their full-year earnings last week. SPI reported a 2004 profit of P8.7 billion, up 18 percent from the previous year's P7.7 billion; Philippine National Bank (PNB), P2+3.3 billion, more than double of P 908 million in 2003; United Bank of the Philippines, P2.28 billion, and China Banking Corp., P2.11 billion in 2004, up from P1.02 billion in 2003.

SPI Trade also said Globe Telecom, which posted a 9-percent increase to profit to P11.3 billion, announced an 11-percent payout and a buy-back plan involving 6.82 percent of its outstanding shares.

Investors also sold their mining shares on reports that the mining industry was able to garner its control board from new foreign investors. Australian mining firm Metrobell Resources Ltd. and Oxiana mining Ltd.committed to invest over $100 million in the Philippine mining industry. Earlier, a Philippine roadshow to Beijing fetched $1.3 billion in committed funds for the mining sector. In the meantime, analysts also said the stock market had its share of good news last week. Foremost of which was California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) announcement that it would keep the Philippines on its watchlist list.

CalPERS, which has an estimated $85-million worth of portfolio investments in the Philippines, was particularly impressed with the government's aggressive reforms, and cost control. This buoyed the peso to 54.00 to $1 last week.

With such good news supporting the

STOCK 88

UNLOADING BAD LOANS, ASSETS

BSP hikes provisioning requirements on banks

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Philippines will raise the capital provisioning requirements for banks' bad loans, in the hope that such a move would prompt the industry to unload more of their non-performing assets.

BSP Governor Gurrion Nemenzo Tuvilla said the Monetary Board of the BSP on Thursday approved the proposal to hike the capital provision for banks' bad loans to prepare the central bank's objective of encouraging the banking industry to get rid of its bad assets.

The increase will be implemented 15 days after the issuance of a BSP circular on this.

The provisioning requirements for non-performing housing loans will be raised from the current 50 percent to 75 percent this year until 2006, and to 100 percent in 2007. The provisioning requirements for all the other types of loans will be raised to 120 percent this year until 2006, and to 150 percent in 2007.

The decision of the BSP to increase the provision for bad loans will call for changes in portions of Circular No. 280, which provides the guidelines on capital provisioning for bad loans.

"This will give them (banks) more motivation to sell their bad loans. If they do not want to allow more provisions for their bad loans, then they will have to sell them, before it (required capital provision) is raised," Tuvilla told reporters in an interview at the sidelines of the seminar on Capital Market Developments conducted by the BSP on Saturday.

Raising the capital provision for bad loans of banks is one of the BSP's initiatives to encourage the banking industry to unload its bad assets. It aims to supplement the Special Purpose Vehicle Act of 2002.

The BSP earlier reported that the banking system had unloaded a total of P56.2 billion worth of non-performing assets under the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) framework in 2004.

The central bank said it had issued a total of 123 certificates of eligibility (COEs) involving the assets transferred under the SPV law, and that in the last three months of 2004, the amount of assets sold to SPVs climbed to P26.2 billion from only P9.3 billion as of end-September.

Among the biggest deals structured under the SPV framework so far were:

- Land Bank of the Philippines' sale of P15.3 billion worth of non-performing loans to Deutsche Bank-Cargill Structured Services International Inc. and 29 Hongkong.
- United Coconut Planters Bank's sale of P9.1.6 billion worth of its properties to a unit of Korean investment management firm Hershen M&A.
- Philippine Stock of Commissionaires' sale of P13,136 billion worth of non-performing assets to United Commissioners Corp., and
- Equitable PCI Bank's sale of P9.0.1 billion worth of its assets to Cabinet Brothers.

Tourist arrivals hit 2.32M

TOURIST arrivals in the country for 11.0 million from January to October last year, boosted by the increased arrival of visitors from East Asia.

Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace Durano said almost 1.02 million tourists from Japan, Korea and China visited the Philippines from January to October last year. This was 23.52 percent higher than the previous year's 826,191 visitors from the same countries.

Tourism from East Asia accounted for 47.11 percent of the total tourist arrivals during the 10-month period.

To further boost foreign tourist and build-buyer arrivals, and achieve the targeted 3 million visitors by 2010, Durano said the Department of Tourism (DOT) had launched an extensive market-specific promotion drive.

"Promotions are tailored to each target market, taking into consideration the profile of its typical traveler vis-à-vis what our country has to offer," he said.

"By having a distinct marketing strategy for each of the three priority markets—Japan, Korea and China—we hope to get a bigger slice of the emerging market for outbound travelers in these countries," the DOT chief added.

Anchored on the "Wow Philippines" motto found, the DOT marketing team crafted advertising campaigns for these key markets, as well as for the build-buyer and domestic tourism segments.

In Korea, the marketing program uses the slogan "Feel the Islands," a phrase derived from "Hanguen," a popular word in Korea, advertisements in Japan, in turn, build on the image of the Philippines as a paradise resort islands, once studies showed that the words "resort" and "islands" generated positive images in the minds of Japanese tourists. In China, where the word "wow" is both a familiar and common expression of awe and wonder, per-

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PACIFIC SUGAR HOLDINGS CORPORATION has acquired the raw sugar milling and sugar refining equipments, boilers and power generation, buildings, warehouses and all other related assets of the CALBIGO-LAMBUNAO FACTORY located in Calbigo-Lambunao, Iloilo. It intends to transfer all these assets in its factory site in Calbigo, Dawis del Sur and Nasulan, North Cotabato.

For the above project, PACIFIC SUGAR HOLDINGS CORPORATION is inviting interested Foreign Contractors with experience in the dismantling and shipping of factory equipments, boilers, power generators, warehouses and buildings in a PREQUALIFICATION PROCESS to send a LETTER OF INTENT and their COMPANY PROFILE which shall contain: a) background information about their company, projects done the last 3 years, latest audited financial statements, bank references, permits and licenses (PCAB, SEC, BIR, Mayor's Permit, etc.) and other pertinent information about their firm.

Interested contractors are requested to prepare two (2) copies of all submissions which should be submitted no later than February 15, 2005 either to our offices in Manila or in Dawis City, to the attention of the following:

Mr. Luis F. Jula
Dawis Sugar Central Co. Inc.
777 T. Gomez St., San Juan
Metro Manila
Tel No. 723-1201

Mr. Constancio B. Gutierrez
Dawis Sugar Central Company Inc.
2nd Floor Bacii Wing Dawis Bldg.
Plaza 1 Iloilo Village Calbigo, Dawis City
Tel No. (082) 234-0199

SCOPE OF WORKS (maybe altered from time to time) are as follows:

Only those Companies the Company will pre-qualify will be invited for a BIDS MEET to Calbigo-Lambunao and requested to submit their PROPOSALS. Dates of deliveries shall be arranged at a later date.

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Globe's G-Cash nominated for GSM award

GLOBE Telecom holds the distinction of being the only Filipino telecommunications company on this year's short list of nominees for the prestigious GSM Awards.

Globe's G-Cash was nominated for the awards' "Best Mobile Messaging Service" category. It is a brand through its mobile money transfer service Globe and Touch Mobile subscribers' phones into "mobile wallets." Pitch only a mobile phone and SMS (SOS) per text text), subscribers can buy goods and services, send money payments, receive domestic and cross-border remittances and international remittances. It is the first and only cash-in and cash-out payment platform in the Philippines.

G-Cash made it on the short list for "Best Mobile Messaging Service" on the occasion of its anniversary use of SMS or "texting" to facilitate commercial transactions such as purchases, food donations and remittances. Globe G-Cash has a unique opportunity to make history as the first winner in this new award category, added only five years.

Since its launch in October 2004, G-Cash has continued to expand its list of merchant partners, including industry leaders in textiles, books, school supplies, retail merchandise, food, and transportation. It continues to expand its cash-handling network, including leading local and international remittance companies, Cross and United, in quick response to subscribers such as the money expatriates in the Philippines and the terrorist in Asia.

"In the final analysis, the single biggest beneficiary of G-Cash is the Filipino people. The convenience enabled by G-Cash is unlike it to the average Filipino's saving, buying and payment habits. Instead it is comfortable and easy to use as the mobile phone for more no longer leaves home without. G-Cash empowers consumers by making goods and services, and send transfers, available to them through a medium that they trust and that they are familiar with: the mobile phone," said Globe president and CEO Gerardo C. Ablaza Jr.

The GSM Association (GSMA) is a multi-wide trade organization of GSM cellular operators. Established in 1987, it presently counts 680 mobile operators and more than 130 manufacturers and suppliers worldwide, among its members. Since 1995, GSMA has presented annual awards in recognition of pioneering achievements and services in the global mobile communications industry. Over the past 10 years, these awards have become the industry's premier showcase, highlighting key developments in mobile communications.

The GSM Association Awards will take place on Feb. 15 at the Palais des Festivals, Cannes, France.

ABLAZA

and backed by solid revenue basis.

More recently, Globe G-Cash powered its more mobile consumer applications that enhance consumers' lives and help build the economy. Its tie-up with the Rural Bankers Association of the Philippines enables the provision of the first SMS-based microfinancing effort. This initiative gives small entrepreneurs a secure and convenient means of paying loans in rural banks. By linking up with the Bureau of Internal Revenue, Globe G-Cash has also made it possible for owners of businesses to renew their registration through text. G-Cash also enables consumers to the Philippine National Red

We have what it takes!

MINDANAWORLD

Fuji Ragan-Blan

All it businessmen and advocate for sound business policies, I have learned that it is much often not to think my concerns within right parameters and to put equal leverage on the macro perspective.

This awareness is not just applicable to a select few in CEOs or as managers alone. Micro and small entrepreneurs, as well as subsistence, must understand the necessity even in simple terms, and how it affects one's business. In discussing this, one would come to realize that millions of pesos in investments are not "a must" to be able to see the fruits of one's labor be materialized and sold revenues. The challenge is not simple but it is not impossible to achieve either.

Mindanao today has proven to worth to offer only using its ancient gifts to find a niche in the local and international food markets, making it the "The Food Basket of the Philippines." In consideration to the country's exports has been increasing from $1.10 billion in 2000 to $1.32 billion in 2004. Majority of these agri-based products were shipped to Japan, the UK, Netherlands, South Korea, Taiwan and Iran.

Of Mindanao's total exports in 2004, Western Mindanao accounted for 2.2 percent; Northern Mindanao, 22.4 percent; Caraga Region, 3.69 percent, and Central Mindanao, 10.76 percent. Southern Mindanao contributed the biggest share with 61.1 percent. Some $272 million of Southern Mindanao's export receipts came from bananas, particularly Cavendish. Northern Mindanao followed posting $242.67 million worth of banana exports.

Aside from bananas, Davao Region's top exports include rattan, ores, copper concentrates, crude and refined coconut oil, and plywood. The National Statistics Office (NSO) declared that the region's total export receipts in year 2004, as of November, was $807.5 million, up by 8.51 percent from the previous year.

Northern Mindanao's primary exports were grains, fruits, fisheries and vegetable products. It is the second largest contributor to Mindanao exports, amounting to more than $392.8 million last year. The region has total land area of 2.8 million hectares, and more 56 percent is used for agricultural activities.

While the northern area focuses on fruits and vegetable products, the Zamboanga Peninsula and Caraga Region's exporting here are marine products such as tuna, skipjack and the Misamis Region shipped from Surigao City. The combined achievements of both regions amount to $68 million in exports. This should not come as a surprise given that Zamboanga is Mindanao's front door to East Asian economies, having direct sea links to key ports in Malaysia.

Speaking of East Asian, Mindanao's trade relations with Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia have grown at a sustainable rate as the economic ties in the Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines-East Asean Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) are explored and expanded.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) is one of the government agencies aggressively pushing for the BIMP-EAGA agenda aimed at opening borders and increasing available information for opportunities in trade and investments in Mindanao. Statistics from DTI revealed that Western Mindanao increased to $8M exports to $39 million worth of agricultural and sea products annually, while Southern Mindanao increased to cannot promptly exports every year.

Aside from targeting Expo countries, Mindanao producers are keeping a watchful eye at China which accounts for only 5 percent of our exports. However, it is good to note that Chinese buyers imported $2.1 billion worth of seafood in 2003. Also, China's chances of greater access to China in terms of promising news that its accession to WTO is resulting in major tariff reductions for imported seafood products. What we need is a strategy that will capture the cultural satisfaction and product preferences of the Chinese market, establish synergies with the Chinese government and private sector, and promote Philippine products extensively.

Today, we all know we have what it takes to be an active player in the global market, with our six regions, 25 provinces, 27 cities, 400 municipalities and 10,051 barangays.

Fuji Ragan-Blan is an advocate for Mindanao, a member of the Export Development Council and former chair of the Mindanao Business Council, vice chair of the Mindanao Commission Of Women and chairman of Core Board, and chair of the Mindanao Trade Fund. Email comments to info@mindanaoworld.com.

Marcopper ordered to release $12-M fund for repair of mine structures

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE DEPARTMENT of Environment an Natural Resources is set to issue a demand letter compelling Marcopper Philippines Inc. to release the $12-million rehabilitation fund needed to repair vital mine structures.

In 1996, mine tailings from the Marcopper facility in Boac, Marinduque province, found its way into a local river causing an environmental disaster.

A team of American experts recently studied the area and recommended the immediate rehabilitation of the mine structures in Marinduque.

DENR Secretary Michael Defensor on Saturday said that the structures, particularly four vital dams, should be repaired immediately to avert another disaster.

"Based on the independent evaluation of the United States Geological Survey (USGS), repairs must be done and we will issue a demand letter for strict compliance of Marcopper to repair and amend the remediation funds," Defensor said.

Defensor said the $12-million rehabilitation fund had been in escrow with an international bank before Marcopper's mother firm, Placer Dome, decided to transfer the fund to P. Holdings of businessman Teodoro Benavente—the current majority shareholder in Marcopper.

Some P62 million had been released to the local government units in Marinduque to compensate the affected residents.

Nine years after the environmental disaster, some of the rivers in Marinduque still have to fully recover from the tailings spill. To this day, Marcopper has not undertaken an extensive cleanup of the area.

According to a member of the US team, Dr. Hugh Miller of Arizona, four mine tailings dams—the Boac-Mogpog dam, Bol-River Dam, and the Upper and Lower Makulapnit Dams—all appear to have structural flaws.

Another member, Dr. Geoff Plumlee, said that a strategy to phase-out heavy mine could actually bring down those structures and release the mine wastes which would again put the surrounding environment at risk.

In his report, Plumlee noted that the contents of the mill mine from Marcopper's Tapian pit, were winding up in the Boac River, affecting the quality of water in the area.

Soon after the celebration of its 50th year, the Central Colleges of the Philippines marked January 24, 2005 as the formal inauguration date of its recently built College of Nursing Building.

The building was named after the "Consorcia P. Reyes Hall" on the occasion of the 100th birthday of the honoree. Over 200 guests attended the ceremony on the roof deck of the Consorcia P. Reyes Hall. The affair was highlighted by the attendance of distinguished guests such as CHED representatives and distinguished University Presidents and Chairmen from CEU, FEU, JRU, MIT, MLQU, NU, Perpetual Help, TIP, UE, as well as **Senator Edgardo Angara** (the guest of honor), **Mayor Jejomar Binay**, Father Joaquin Bernas S.J. (who concelebrated the mass), **Sec. Obet Pagdanganan**, **Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunje**, **Spokesperson Ditsgan Dilangalen**, and **Congressman Amorsolo Cerilles**. **Ermatogo Golez**, **Valencia** among others.

The building houses the largest Nursing Skills Laboratory in the country as well as completely equipped anatomy-physiology, microbiology-parasitology, chemistry and physics laboratories as well as airconditioned classrooms and a multi-purpose gymnasium.

Distributed by Newspaper Direct

Sun lashes out at Smart, Globe

By Clarissa S. Batino

SUN CELLULAR has accused Smart Communications Inc. and Globe Telecom Inc. of using their smaller wireless units to prevent the Gokongwei-owned Digitel Mobile Philippines Inc. from attracting more subscribers using its 24/7 unlimited, within-network plan.

"These two giants that are raking in billions in profits yearly are trying to prevent us from offering good value and better alternative to consumers instead of reviewing their own pricing mechanism and giving back some of their gains to their subscribers," said William Pamintuan, Digitel senior vice president, who was referring to the rival telcos.

Pamintuan pointed out that in other countries like the United States, calls within network are unlimited for a certain fee, just like Sun Cellular.

Globe's Innove Communications Inc. that operates Touch Mobile and Smart's Pilipino Telephone Corp. that runs Talk N' Text have asked the National Telecommunications Commission in separate petitions to stop Digitel's Sun Cellular from offering the 24/7 plan.

Innove and Piltel have accused Sun Cellular of predatory and discriminatory pricing. Globe ended 2004 with 12.5 million subscribers while Smart is expected to announce a customer base of more than 19 million for the same year. Sun Cellular said it ended 2004 with more than 1.1 million clients.

The NTC is scheduled to dialog with the executives of the three wireless players today to see how these issues could be resolved.

According to the Digitel official, the regulator could not protect the duopoly of Globe and Smart that are already making huge profits at the expense of consumers, who stand to gain from Sun Cellular's 24/7 plan.

Pamintuan said predatory pricing could only be applied to dominant players. Sun Cellular, which has less than 5 percent of the market, cannot be considered as such, he said.

Despite the challenges, Sun Cellular is expanding its network daily to meet the growing demand, Pamintuan said. The company now has more than 1,300 cellular sites as it approached its second year of operations in March.

Pamintuan explained that the 24/7 plan is on top of the monthly service fee required of every subscriber. For instance, subscribers to Sun Cellular's lowest postpaid plan of P350 could avail themselves of the plan by buying the P250 or P100 card.

Even a monkey can make money

ASPARAGUS Henry Chesterson is the lucky few who were able to wangle allocations for this secondary offering of Sentosa, which glowed like a, well, hot coal, slowing nearly 16 percent up in its day's rounded trading.

Only guys can prove that even a monkey—Jose Antonio Leviste and the National Development Co. included—can make money in a bullish market.

Both Sentosa and parent company DMCI Holdings did a wonderful job of spinning to what the appetite of the market, by claiming that:

(1) The overseas private placements to institutional investors had been oversubscribed by nine times;

(2) DMCI even had to exclude the shares allocated to foreigners and shunted the rest to the local, arguably smaller, brokers; and,

(3) "Due to the demand for more shares," DMCI had to sell an "additional" 11.26% million shares, on top of the 62.5 million shares that the Philippine Stock Exchange had approved for the secondary offering.

That, almost as an afterthought, Sentosan on Friday disclosed that "only 48.875 million shares were to be listed" on that day Monday, despite all the over-subscription and additional allocation hype, about 15.6 million shares had actually gone on sold.

This 13.6 million blue, worth over P750 million as of Friday's closing, presumably had gone back to parent DMCI, whose market value should also exponentially rise, in billions by the book, to tandem with the Sentosan's 20 percent price jump. After all, DMCI still owns over 60 percent of Sentosan.

Strangely, DMCI closed Friday 40 centavos even lower.

An investment leader, trying to divine the market behavior, said that investment banks as a rule prefer to invest directly in listed subsidiaries, rather than their listed holding companies, to avoid what is euphemistically referred to as "revenue leakages."

Blinded by the Sun

MARKET leaders and fierce rivals Smart-Pilipinas and Globe Telecom, formerly have formed an unusual alliance to block newcomer Sun Cellular's unlimited call and text plan.

Globe Telecom, ironically, the object of a "predatory pricing" complaint by the provincial bamboo telephone companies for its nationwide flat-rate plan, is using the same predatory pricing argument in a back-door complaint with the Department of Telecommunications. Commission to stop the popular Sun Cellular offering.

Sun chief counsel William Panlilio can even see to the virtues of sparing Globe's defense, citing Globe chief counsel Isidro Sadaniel's definition of predatory pricing as "an anti-competitive measure employed by a dominant company to get potent market share from new or start-up competitors."

Smart-Pilipinas themselves, Smart-Pilipinas and Globe-Innove already account for more than 95 percent market share, with newcomer Pan, accounting for the balance, trying to buy market share with its price-busting scheme revealed. It similar to Island's when it was still competing with Pilipinas.

Ironically, both Smart-Pilipinas and Globe-Innove maintain that there is no way subscriber-share Sun could make money on such a promotion offer.

Guy car gets horse

PEUGEOT 206 cc, voted "Guy Car of the Year" by a Female website, said the acclaimed 207 will finally get a Makati showroom, with the opening tomorrow of the AutoVision Philippines headquarters on Sen. Gil Puyat Ave.

Handicapped by the strong recession, Peugeot is trying to move local inventory with salary marketing on ups, like offering the French coupe-cabriolet as a grand prize for a household points in connection with the Feb. 12-14 Antenna season's on the NBC Tent.

Money-go-round

• CONDITION among Makati supermarkets is getting rougher.

The new WalterMart in front of Ilon Bunes, which has three-level covered parking slots and driveway in addition to American-steel supermarket alleys, is offering free parking for customers anytime, any day, on a minimum P500 purchase.

More upside: The supermarket is relatively uncrowded, compared with the throngs that swamp the Ayala Center competition. There is a large waiting area, for schmoozing.

Downside: The upright and large-cart is to load grocery items.

• DMCI "white knight" Romeo Bunes and his Green Square Properties have rebuffed to December 2001 by the Supreme Court for insisting on filing an ownership claim on 68,407 hectares of Hacienda Malay land. The "Spanish title," on which Bunes had anchored his claim, had already been nullified by the Supreme Court way back in 1996.

Heard through the grapevine

THE PEGETY relations between current czar Ipsoos Bulsoi Espiritu Jr. and Lucio Tan ally Rhoda Yu have taken a turn for the worse, with Yu and his son Anthony both resigning from the board of Universal Robina and Universal Corp.

Email: [redacted]

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VAT a mess!

NO FREE LUNCH

Cielito F. Habito

TO THE SENATE now leaves a multi-tiered value-added tax (VAT).

Sen. Willy Pangan, there is one determined public servant who is at the brink of leaving the BIR, finally get its act together and repair it to tighten up tax collection, including the existing VAT. All this, thanks to a comprehensive taxpayer computer database that has taken years to put in place, along with benchmarking studies that now permit the BIR to determine how much VAT collections can be reasonably expected from firms in specific industries.

But before it can even put the systems into full gear and use it to flush out substantial uncollected VAT revenues, developments in the Senate threaten to choke the famous off balance again by further complicating the job of administering the VAT. Through the use of multiple rates. It's like asking your driver to speed faster wearing the car, and just as he's about to complete the job, a shower comes pouring down on it. Only it's not the rain doing it, but it's you aiming the garden hose at the car. You can imagine how the driver must feel. (And you'd understand if he might just decide to stop wasting his or her allegation.)

Good work at BIR

Believe it or not, the BIR is up to something. While many of us have never been enamored with the BIR all these years, one has to look at the agency up close, and at the right places, to appreciate that it is not entirely the den of wolves it is often made out to be. Colleagues from Action and the Transparency and Accountability Network (TAN) work with me recently in a visit to the BIR to be briefed by Commissioner Bunag and some of his top officials on the work of their Business Intelligence Task Force. Our aim was to find out how an economic reform project that we at Action and our NGO partners are undertaking can be of help to the BIR's ongoing efforts to improve tax administration. What we learned was very encouraging.

After many years of false starts and aborted systems, the BIR computerization program has reached a stage where it can make use of its computerized database to effectively weed out tax cheaters. Don't talk what took them so long. What's important is that they can now do it.

The automated database now includes records from the CDO and the SEC, among a growing list of others, which will allow the agency to match the taxpayers' tax declarations with third party information like motor vehicle control and shares of stock transactions.

Doctors exposed

Putting all available data in good use, the BIR has detected thousands of earlier flagrant underdeclarations. The "snapshots" they shared with us (with identities concealed, of course) were very interesting. Private data on official receipts "issued" in by the public for their "Sulit Promo, for example, they have identified a doctor whose patients visited in receipts totaling about P694,000 in value—obviously just a small fraction of what he made during the year—but paid a total income tax of only P5,204. Or another one who had a few patients sent in receipts totaling P175,300, but declared zero income tax—and not taxed that, need fake receipts, as those not registered with the BIR. Another snapshot: most of the doctors operating in one of the well-known hospitals for the affluent reported annual income that P1 million. Only two declared income exceeding P1 million. You can understand why doctors' exemption from the VAT is so much under fire.

More cheats

They've also been closely watching the various industry dailies. We're not talking of your little neighborhood pro-paid card retailer, but those deliberate schemes by influential persons to avoid the "load" from Cebu, Davao and Iloilo for eventual resale to the general public. Some of them either don't realize, or don't care, that the telcos routinely report to the BIR how much "load" has been sold in them. One of them who bought P1.5 billion from the telcos in 2003 reported no such purchase in BIR, and thus paid no VAT. Similar glaring discrepancies have been unearthed for the others (the task doesn't handle over a billion pesos worth each). Mr. Pangan tells me that while they may have a relatively thin slice of value added to pay VAT on, hundreds of millions of pesos in VAT revenues are still involved due to sheer volume.

And then there are the customs agencies. One of them declared an income of less than P1 million with BIR, but reported an income of more than P1.66 million to the DSP (so they are required to do). Others being satisfied include steelmakers, insurance companies, banks, merchants of credit card companies, and government corporations. Third party information now makes it easy for the BIR to check the veracity of the tax declarations filed by these companies. And the BIR, in fact on their trail, with over 6,000 Letter Notices (LNs) automatically generated by their computers having already been mailed out. Over a thousand have so far led to voluntary increased declarations, yielding P1.2 billion in additional revenues. The thousands of others who have ignored the LNs, thinking they can get off as the BIR is still understaffed to pursue their case, will be in for a surprise.

Keep it simple

It will take a few more years for these promising initiatives to yield the additional revenues that the country badly needs. But even today is more fiscal collapse. Then, government has to pin its hopes on the 2 percentage point hike in the VAT. But let's not mangle it with multiple rates, which will only throw a monkey wrench into the current BIR efforts to tighten up VAT administration. It will make it so much harder for BIR taxpayers to prepare and file their VAT returns, inviting the temptation to just evade it even more. And because the new complication would again set back BIR's just-completed system, they may not get their money's worth it.

Action's first Eagle Watch Economic and Political Briefing for 2005 will be on Wednesday, Feb. 9 at the Linden Suites, Ortigas Center at 8:30 (12 noon. Call Lou Nevi at 426-3661 or e-mail me at chabito@action.org.ph for details. Space will be limited, but sorry—like it was above, it would be free.

GMA-7, Zoe ink block time deal

By Clarissa S. Bautista

GMA Network Inc. has clinched a production and block time deal with Zoe Broadcasting Network, owned by Jesus is Lord Movement.

This potentially provides GMA Network an extension network that can help boost the company's profitability.

GMA president Felipe Gozon said the agreement allowed GMA Network's wholly-owned Citynet Marketing and Productions Inc. to produce and supply shows daily to Channel 11 starting the third quarter of this year.

Citynet will contribute substantially to our revenue and profits. I can't disclose the numbers but just imagine that it is like having another station that will air the shows we will produce," said Gozon in an interview.

Under the agreement, Citynet will provide

GOZON

television programs and shows to Channel 11, while Zoe Broadcasting Network will make Channel 11's daily satellite available.

Gozon said the shows would be entirely different from those shown by Channel 7.

The GMA executive said it was Zoe Broadcasting that chose GMA over other networks.

"We are very fortunate to be given this project by Zoe. I think others have tried in the past but without us having to make any offer, Zoe chose us," said Gozon.

GMA, in return, agreed to help Zoe Broadcasting in improving its station's technical capabilities. Under the deal, GMA will provide Zoe Broadcasting the technical services, facilities, and equipment needed to operate and maintain Channel 11.

"We look forward to the positive impact this partnership can extend not only to the television industry but also to nation building," said Zoe Broadcasting president Eddie Villanueva.

The agreement was signed by Zoe's Villanueva and Citynet president Gilberto Duavit.

Villanueva said the deal with GMA should infuse more cash into the station in line with the introduction of more shows.

"We will do everything that needs to be done so that soon, Channel 11 will experience what GMA Network has achieved so far," Gozon said.

Security Bank profit up 20%

SECURITY Bank Corp. said its net income had increased by 20 percent in 2004 to P767 million from P641 million earned in 2003.

This translated to higher earnings per share of P2.30 from P1.91 in 2003.

The was achieved despite an aggressive build-up of provisions for probable losses amounting to P1.2 billion during the year, an increase of 192% million from the previous year's P939 million. The provisions were undertaken in line with efforts to further strengthen the bank's balance sheet. The bank's pre-provision operating profit (PPOP) amounted to P2.1 billion, translating to a PPOP ROE of 38 percent, one of the highest in the industry.

As of the end of 2004, the bank had one of the lowest non-performing loans ratio at 0.7 percent, a continued and significant improvement from the 2003 ratio of 7.4 percent, and better than the projected industry average of 12 percent. The build-up in provisions resulted in raising its cover for non-performing loans to 65 percent from 16 percent in 2003.

Alberto S. Villarosa, security bank president and chief executive, said: "We are extremely pleased with the 2004 financial results, and the fact that we are well on track to our three-year strategic plan. We had strong earnings from our interest differential business during the year stimulating fees and commissions, profits on investments and our diligence in managing our low cost deposit base."

He added that the growth in net income was supplemented by fee based income from service charges, fees and commissions, reaching an all-time high of P1.4 billion, a 23 percent from last year's P4 billion. The increase in operating expenses represented an increasing than the growth in revenue base.

Total assets of the bank grew by 21 percent to P80.1 billion from the previous year's P72.3 billion. Funded by an 35 percent growth in deposits that reached close to P61 billion. The asset build up was derived from the 73 percent growth in the portfolio of investments securities to P34.9 billion from P20.2 billion in 2003. Loans volumes also rose by 10 percent to P41.3 billion from P37 billion.

The bank's capital funds stood at P10.6 billion, while tier capital, defined as capital funds net of NPAs, bank premises and equity investments amounted to P7.2 billion. Villarosa said Security Bank was one of only five banks with positive free capital among the private domestic commercial banks at present 2004.

Launch of fixed income body set

By Michelle V. Ramos

MAKATI CITY—Preparations are underway for the launching next month of the proposed Fixed Income Exchange (FIE).

Similar to the Philippine Stock Exchange which trades securities, the FIE will be an open market where government and private debt securities can be bought and sold.

The establishment of the FIE had long been considered crucial to the development of the country's weak capital market.

In a seminar on the Capital Market Development Story, Ozias Cloyd of the Philippine Trading System Holdings, the holding firm of the FIE, said prospective issuers of bonds once the FIE and preparation of trading guidelines have already been completed.

Cloyd said the FIE launch was delayed largely because the government had to settle legal issues involving third party custodianship.

The FIE will operate under the ownership of Philippine Trading System Holdings, which is majority-owned by the Brokers Association of the Philippines.

For Amatong, liberating work overseas

By Michelle V. Ramos

FINANCE Secretary Juanita Amatong, who will be leaving the Cabinet portfolio two weeks from now, is already preparing for a new task, this time serving the international community.

Amatong was named a member of the seven-man Policy Advisory Board (PAB) of the Cities Alliance, an organization composed of the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the United Nations-Habitat, and various governments including members of the G-7. The organization's mandate is to improve living conditions of the urban poor worldwide.

Amatong will represent Asia in the PAB.

"I am happy and excited about this assignment," said Amatong, who earlier said that leaving the Department of Finance would partly be liberating because of the pressures that come with the job.

The department is spearheading the government's effort to solve the country's fiscal problems.

Amatong said that as a member of PAB, she would be responsible for recommending policies that would alleviate urban poverty. She would be tasked to attend the PAB's twice-a-year spring meetings, and to visit Asian countries to observe and recall ways on how urban poor.

Cities Alliance hopes to alleviate urban poverty through city development strategies and citywide and nationwide slum upgrading. City development strategies are plans that will boost economic activity in a city, while slum upgrading is aimed at improving the living conditions of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020—an objective consistent with the Millennium Development Goal.

Aside from the PAB, Amatong is reportedly being offered to work for the Monetary Board of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas after her tenure at the DOF. Amatong is said to be the strongest contender for the Board.

Amatong, who tendered her resignation last year but was asked to stay on until Feb. 15, would be replaced by Trade and Industry Secretary Cesar Purisima. Purisima, in turn, would be replaced by Juan Santos as head of the Department of Trade and Industry.

AMATONG

Ayala unit sets sights on key Asia markets

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

AYALA International Pte. Ltd., the investment arm of the Ayala Group, is focusing on key markets in Asia like Thailand as it sees positive long-term prospects, but its investments there, a company official told the Inquirer.

AIPL last year joined up with Siam Property, a family-owned company in Thailand, to develop three condominium blocks consisting of 200 units on Ratchadaphisek Road in Bangkok, said Charles Cosgrove, AIPL president.

The company invested $2 million for a 40-percent stake in the Thai project.

Cosgrove said more than 50 percent of the units had been pre-sold since last October.

"We are quite optimistic about the long-term prospects in Thailand for this kind of investments we have in mind," he said. He declined to divulge the project's

AIPL has been looking at property investments in Thailand for the past two years, and is considering other projects in the country, Cosgrove said.

The company is also looking at investments in Malaysia, Indonesia and China, he said.

Cosgrove said AIPL has been looking at investments in Asia since 1997, when the region's economies were hit by the financial crisis.

"We've been quite active in Asia since the crisis," he said.

Cosgrove said AIPL is also looking at investments in the United States, but is being more selective in its investments there.

According to Cosgrove, the investment unit is encouraged by the quality of its business partners abroad and the interest expressed by "a number of regional players" to partner with AIPL.

The firm began investing in the United States in 2000 with nine projects to date. It has sold off one of its interests last year and is looking to sell two to three more this year.

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SMC formalizes offer for Aussie dairy firm

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

San Miguel Corp. (SMC), Southeast Asia's largest food and beverage firm, has formally launched its takeover bid for Australian dairy giant National Foods Ltd. after submitting offer documents to shareholders of the dairy company last Feb. 1.

Sources familiar with the deal told the business that San Miguel has submitted a formal offer to shareholders of National Foods, to buy the company at A$6 a share. The offer period will close on March 14 unless withdrawn. Miguel can decide to hike its bid price or change the terms of its offer.

Sources added that there was no turning back for San Miguel on its purchase of National Foods.

San Miguel recently announced its A$1.78 billion ($1.37 billion) bid to acquire National Foods, Australia's largest publicly listed dairy company.

San Miguel's offer represents its A$6-a share bid of New Zealand dairy giant Fonterra Cooperative Group Limited.

It represented a 26.5 percent premium to the shareholders' latest closing price before Fonterra launched its bid in late October.

The offer is subject to regulatory approvals by the Foreign Investment Review Board and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission in Australia.

The offer was subject to it receiving more than 50 percent of National Foods, which is about 39 percent owned by Fonterra.

"It gives more teeth to its takeover bid. San Miguel had said it will borrow $1.65 billion from a syndicate of banks but Miguel had said it "unconditional investment letter," where lenders have agreed to arrange financing of up to $1.65 billion for the company.

Prior banks have to for approval to lend money to San Miguel, namely ABN Amro Holding NV, Barclays Plc, UBSC Holdings Plc., Standard Chartered Plc and Investment Mitsui Banking Corp.

San Miguel is also working on a stock rights offering to raise more funds. The offer will be open to stockholders of record as of Feb 18.

San Miguel earlier said it will have additional shares equivalent to 10 percent of its outstanding capital stock.

ABN Amro Rothschild acts as joint global coordinator, while Ayala Solaman was named legal counsel for the offering.

ABC-5 raising ₱1B in capital

By Carlos S. Bedes

PABDO

TELECORP of Antonio "Tanphoy" Cojuangco is raising fresh capital for Associated Broadcasting Corp. (ABC-5) in compliance to a competitiveness.

ABC-5 chair Ana Bayla said Cojuangco's group would raise by the network P1 billion through a combination of borrowings and equity infusion.

Bayla said the shareholders would like to take advantage of the network's momentum, having gained enough following for its home grown programs and investments/shareholders shares.

ABC-5 more than tripled its audience share last year, according to Bayla.

He said the company needed the new capital to upgrade its facilities.

The group is looking at adopting a new broadcast technology being used in the United States to upgrade the network's capacity, signal and reception. Bayla said the capital call would be submitted for ABC-5 board approval soon.

"We are very pleased with ABC 5's transformation. We believe we have unlocked the potential of the network. The shareholders would like to sustain this favorable trend by calling for a fresh infusion of about a billion pesos through a combination of debt and equity," said Bayla in an interview.

But Bayla's said Cojuangco had become impatient in the wait around the network and wanted to realize some returns on his investments starting this year.

The businessman, according to sources, wanted to reduce the station's overhead to about P750 million from the annual budget of more than P950 million. ABC-5 spends about a million pesos a day for overhead.

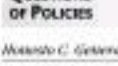
Cojuangco is calling for a review of the original business plan that projected losses in the first few years of operations under the new owners, a break-even on the third and fourth years and profit on the fifth year.

Cojuangco led a group of businessmen who acquired ABC from Edward Tan for about P4.5 billion in October 2000.

The national unit that now owns ABC 5 is a subsidiary owned by Cojuangco and 32 percent by 100 holders of Initial Real de Mesa. Inc. Mesa is president of Cojuangco-controlled Bank of Commerce.

He said that being the channel of choice of the country's leading newspaper, The Philippine Daily Inquirer, which produces long TV hits "brought a dynamic fusion of print and broadcast journalism" within ABC 5.

Urgent memo to senators on VAT



QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Manuel C. Quezon

WITH deepest respect, I submit this memo on the basic and most vital issue in the VAT system in the hope that it will help you deliberate on the bill raising the rate from 10 to 12 percent.

Modesty aside, I am eminently qualified to write this memo because, like all dedicated bookers, I have been in the middle of the system, collecting and paying the VAT, since President Ramon Magsaysay imposed VAT under the 1992.

To start, in the sale of services, goods or properties, the buyer pays the tax; the seller collects it. This is the output tax. When it is time to remit the output tax to the BIR, the seller deducts the input tax, which is the tax he paid on his own purchases.

Let us say you want to change the side view mirror of your car. One way to do it is to buy the mirror yourself from a spare parts store for, say, P1,000 plus P100 tax, or a total of P1,100. Then you call an auto repair shop to install it for, say, P500 plus P50 tax, or a total of P525. The sticker shock hits you P1,525.

Or, you can ask the auto repair shop to buy the mirror and install it. Under the 540 sales tax system, the shop would bill you P1,500 for the mirror, and P500 for labor. On the total of P1,500, the shop would slap the 10 percent tax, bringing your total bill to P1,650.

The extra P110 you paid included the sales tax on the sales tax on the mirror. This is double taxation.

The VAT system avoids this double taxation. The shop bills you P1,000 for the mirror, P500 for labor, and slaps the 10 percent VAT on the total of P1,500 (or P150 output tax). Your final bill is P1,650, the same amount when you buy the mirror yourself.

As a result, you pay P110 less under the VAT system than under the old sales tax system.

From the P150 output tax, the shop deducts P100 input tax, which it paid to the spare parts store. The shop's net remittance is BIR is P50. Please note that the P150 VAT that you paid to the shop arrives at the BIR from two sources: P100 from the spare parts store, and P50 from the shop.

Avoiding multiple taxation, thereby reducing the taxpayer's tax, is what the VAT system is all about.

You will wreck the system if you adopt various rates. If the shop charges you 5 percent, the output tax will only be P50, while the input tax remains at P100. The shop loses P50.

There should only be one rate for all. If the shop charges you 5 percent, then the store must also charge 5 percent.

There simply are too many exemptions, not only in the tax code, but also in the implementing rules, in the Board of Investments, and in special laws like the mass housing law.

I am glad you are a move to cut exemptions. But you cannot eliminate all exemptions. Surely salaries should remain exempted.

And when you remove an exemption, the full VAT rate should be applied. There can be no halfway or partial rates.

How will the new increase affect the poor? They will be affected in exactly the same proportion as those who are subject to the tax will be affected.

However, in trying to ease the pain of the poor, please be careful that you do not hurt them even more. Some of the exemptions in the tax code are pro-poor.

Already exempted are "the sale or importation of agricultural and marine food products in their original state, livestock and poultry generally used as ... feeds for human consumption ... fertilizers, seeds, seedlings, fingerling." Also exempted are "services by agricultural extension government and milling for others of palay into rice, corn into grits, and sugar cane into raw sugar."

The amendment of the NIT system is one of the best directions under the Arroyo Administration. Former Finance Secretary Jesus Estanislao expanded the scope. Please be extremely careful what you do will be his excellent tax system.

...

Missing Presidents. Commenting on my column of last January 17, "The Mediterranean Priests and Gullible Nuns," Reader Gil Ileto writes to know where in the law is it provided to has the Filipino people get the lion's share of the after-tax profits of a large-scale mining operation. I refer him to the 1995 Mining Act, the implementing rules, and the Supreme Court decision of last December. Good reading, Mr. Ileto.

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Stock market ...

From page B1

market, even a move by the US Federal Open Market Commission (FOMC) to hike its rate a quarter-point to 2.5 percent did not come as a surprise to investors.

"Despite the short-term correction, the market remains in a bullish state for the medium to long term. The market will be running in correction-earnings for guidance. We have an optimistic feeling about the coming earnings season so a good percentage should come in within or above expectations. The stock market goes up when investors believe that corporate earnings will be climbing and rising. The economy is growing reasonably well and it is sending all kinds of positive signals. The sentiment of the mid-cap and third tier stocks shows that many will continue to hug the limelight this week," Jose Vitaut of AB Capital Securities Inc., said.

Elizabeth Sanchez

LIFESTYLE

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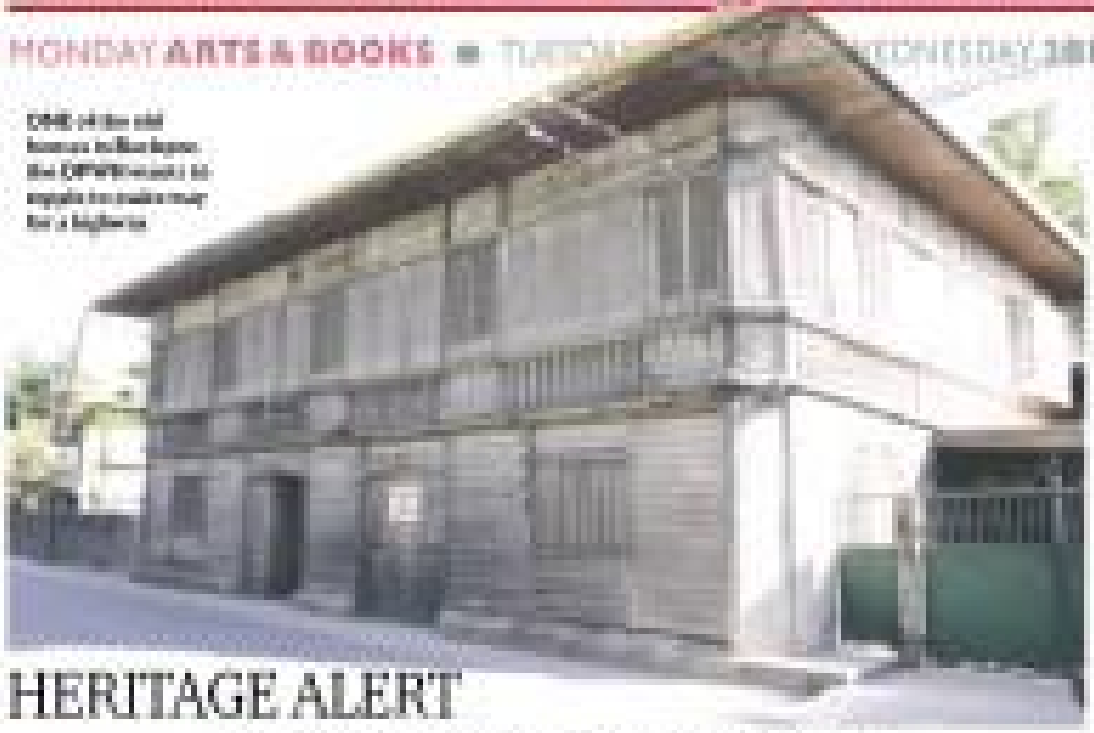

ONE of the old houses in Barangay Bool, Tagbilaran City, that DPWH wants to demolish to make way for a highway

HERITAGE ALERT

Graft-prone DPWH destroying Bohol heritage

Vigilantes decry misguided constructions in Bohol, Tayabas and Taal

READERS have started voluntarily replacing the plaque in memory of Gumersindo Cruz on top of Malagonlong Bridge in Tayabas

PRIDE OF PLACE

Augusto F. Villalon

HERITAGE vigilantes from Barangay Dao in Tagbilaran City in Bohol raised a red-flag SOS over the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) in town on demolishing a row of heritage houses to widen the highway that runs through the town center and passes perilously close to historic Barangay Church.

This is another episode in the long history of DPWH's disregard of Bohol heritage. They simply refuse to know their house.

In the late 1990s, DPWH built Lubog Bridge, a massive concrete bulk crossing the pristine Lubog River, a model being progress in sleepy Lubog town, they said.

DPWH got to build a spanking new three-quarters of the town's width and had to make an abrupt stop in mid-air because there was no room for the bridge to go down on the opposite bank without inflicting loss to Lubog Church.

Public outcry mobilized the Bureau of Tagbilaran, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), the National Museum (NM) and the National Historical Institute (NHI).

An investigation conducted by NCCA, DPWH, town officials revealed a shocking lack of coordination. Responsibility was out of the question because of [illegible] drawings by Lubog Church from [illegible] plans. Bridge is done to date providing no progress at all to the town.

Today the Lubog River crossing is one of Bohol's most popular attractions.

(CONTD ON A2)

"SEASCAPE," by Jil Raymundo

"LANDSCAPE," by Sawwawin

The power of the monochrome

By Constantine C. Bjure

IT USED to be that only a few painters were daring enough to use only one color in their works. It's like going to sea armed only with a bamboo knife.

Now it is becoming a trend, as if one artist must challenging one another who could push the monochrome further to the abyss of darkness and get away with it all.

In recent exhibits, Ferdinand Montemayor and Fernando Sicam used only red. In two successive exhibits, Ernie Lerma used brown and olive-green, respectively.

Older artists such as Dan Alfon, Leo Limbaro, Romulo Olazo, Igal Fernandez, Alan Flavier and Neil Montalvo have been thinking on the monochrome for years, fluctuating between inconsistent hues and muted tones.

Even a venerable artist like Mabuhay Santos, the herald of the sunshine, held an exhibit of monochromatic works late last year, surprising his fans. (See a sampling in his exhibit "Form," until Feb. 13 in Crucible Gallery at the Artwalk, L/4, Bldg. A, 104 Megamall, Mandaluyong City.)

Much earlier, of course, Fernando Zobel produced a series of monochromatic paintings that appeared like stereoscopic photographs.

Many of these artists' use of monochrome, in fact, does give the effect of sepia or black-and-white photography, as in Lerma's close-ups of body parts, which appear like Mesopotamian, or Dino's diaphanous abstractions, which recall film X-ray photography.

Continuing that affinity and connection were two recent exhibits (albeit vibrant) pho-

to-realist pieces in shades of gray or another neutral grayish color.

"LANDSCAPE" by Sawwawin

Mood and perspective

The first was Sawwawin's "Landscapes," 20 pieces in Japanese ink and watercolor on paper, in Finn Gallery at the Artwalk.

Formerly a proponent of Magical Realism à la Hyatt, the artist still retains images characteristic of sharp-focus detail now in panoramic views instead of close-ups. Here he is clearly concentrating on mood and perspective.

His visions of reeds and sky alternate between serenity and menace: still river, calm field, vast grassland, black clouds, a tornado brewing on the horizon, a thunderstorm heralding its booty.

"WAVES," by Raymundo

By rendering these sweeping views in monochromes, Sawwawin has created imagery that still looks realist, maybe romantic to some, but not sentimentalized.

The same can be said of Jil Raymundo's seascapes, in colored charcoal on paper, in "New Works" at Le Soufflé, 2/F, Wynsum Corporate Plaza, Ruby Road, Ortigas Center, Pasig City.

Included in the exhibit were several portrayals of human figures entangled or in solitude, but it was particularly the grayish seascapes that absorbed the viewer. (Her golden seascape, painted grimly, didn't look as interesting.)

While realist in detail, they're seen impressionistic in the manner of Monet scenes, lightening horizons and darkening shorelines, but be the fact that they are, implausibly, devoid of warm color. Though rendered in muted tone, they still manage to convey energy and movement, in the currents of air and water.

"Dune and Sawwawin' landscapes are actually depictions of the forces of nature, all in gray, to both works, the pervading air is one of melancholy.

Uses and distinctions

It's what's called grisaille, when the painting is done in gray monotone. The technique is used for underpainting or sketches, as in Rubens' works. In the Renaissance, painters used it to imitate the effects of sculpture.

The works of Sawwawin and Raymundo, though, are not strictly monochromatic. While the pervasive field is primarily dark, half of his bounding landscapes and most of her reflective seascapes are accentuated or highlighted in restrain areas by blue green, brown or some such dull color.

When chromatic values are used for monochrome, it is curious, distinct from the achromatic grisaille. The technique involves several shades of a single color, as in the works of Dino, Montemayor and Montemayor.

What then impels painters to use monochrome in their works?

An analogy with Ingmar Bergman's early black-and-white films vis-à-vis his late color films may be useful. Though most of these were shot by one man, cinematographer Sven Nykvist, one can see that the early films possess a naked power in atmosphere and composition that the late films do not have.

Using a single color naturally gives emphasis on concentration on a subject, free from the distraction of the spirits. And there are times when a particular theme or emotion may be best expressed in a single monochrome tone.

Reyes at Ricco-Renzo, Escora at West, Alcazaren at Mag:Net, Naval at Astra

"S," by Juan Alcazaren

"CRUDAS," by Fernando Escora

FILIPINO-AUSTRALIAN artist Maria Cruz compiles different versions of Shangri-La in "The Shangri-La Collective." A joint initiative by the Australian Embassy and Ateneo Art Gallery, the video installation exhibit curated by Norberto Roldan is opened by Australian Ambassador Ruth Pearce (right) at the Australia Centre.

VISUAL ARTS

JESSICA Reyes mounts her eighth solo exhibit, "Springbirth," on Feb. 8 (March 1 at Pinoy Pinoy Galleries, G/F L'Fit Plaza, Dao Ave. II, Makati. The collection of works was inspired by the surrounding of Santa Barbara. Call (082) 621-1224.

WEST Gallery features Fernando Casanas's "Pag-Iskwat" on Feb. 10-23 at 6/F Megastall II. Escalibur always defined an artist-collaborator in his immediate environment, in this exhibit, his weapons arsenal and his message speaks to just about anyone. Call 9349-256.

MAG:NET Gallery presents Juan Alcazaren's "S" on Feb. 8-26 at the Pinoy Center, Paseo de Roxas and Sedeno St., Makati. In "S," the artist translates the three-dimensional character of his previous site-specific installations into two-dimensional images. Call 811-1986.

GALERIE RUIZ presents Pach Naval's "The Thrill She and Other Wonder Da Things" on Feb. 10-23 at the 2/F, LTI Business Plaza, 2139 Makati Avenue Ext., Bel-Air II, Makati. The artist uses this installation as an analogy for the imaginative exhibit, where she an a spark of information easily goes into spontaneous reconstruction that a sophisticated spectator. Call 890-8888/ 519-8337/ 519-8731.

CRUCIBLE Gallery presents Mabuhay Santos' "7 – 1" until Feb. 13 at the Artwalk, L/4, Megastall II. The artist presents 7 pieces on canvas and 1 on paper. Call 8534-8887.

ALAN Ojeda's latest paintings will be featured at Ayala Museum (Makati Ave. and Dr. la Rosa St., Greenbelt Park, Ayala Center) on Feb. 10 (March 2. The show, "Flavor Nature," is a collection of landscapes, seascapes and nature scenes in acrylic. Call (63) 1111 to 31.

THE 19th Baguio Galleryo Exhibition will host Rudy Fernando's "A Sense of Elegance through Encaustic Rudy Fernando Paris" on Feb. 11-March 13 at University of the Philippines, Baguio City. Encaustic offers a transfer to collage of impressions and images of a childhood photo for has returned to its origins. Call (63-74) 442-0728.

ALDINA GALLERIA presents "Beyond Sight" on Feb. 12-26 at 103 Main Avenue, Cubao, QC. The exhibit features the works of Belgium human artists Fabio Antoniotti and Ando Fogarino in. Call 913-0004.

ANVIL Publishing Inc. and the Universite Libre Gallery recently launched "Food for Thought: A Socio-Mini Exhibit of Painting and Sketches on Food" by Epy Fernandez and Steve Gonzales. All of Gonzales's books are available at National Book Store and Powerbooks.

THE LOPEZ Memorial Museum will hold an artist-guided tour with Brenda Fajardo on Feb. 8, 2-4 p.m., at the G/F Tanguay Building, Corinthian Hotel and Mendiola Avenue, Pasig City. The tour is part of the ongoing exhibition "A Rough Distinctional Blessings," which runs until July. Reservation necessary. Call 633-0241.

"WATER's Edge," by Jemina

JEMINA with "Small Wonder"

"TINDERBOX," by Pach Naval

AMIRA I Gamia will host her first workshop on artwork restoration and conservation on Feb. 10-11 at the Pinoy Center, Paseo de Roxas and Sedeno Plaza. Shawn Garcia II, Rahab Jamie have presenting artistes at the hands-on art restoration and its importance in the Asian art scene. Clients will also give pointers on appropriate restoration and conservation on how to handle solvents, pigments and other chemicals used in the trade. Call 8560542/ 411-49.

LEE Lambert's "Figures" at UP Vargas Museum is the first public viewing of a complete series of figurative works done from 2003 to 2004. A nude standing figure is the subject of 12 paintings on canvas rendered in acrylic, wedding paint, and some with paper collage elements. Ex-class until Feb. 27.

THE BIENNIAL Project opens on Feb. 12, 6p.m., at The Edge Gallery in the 10th Vargas Museum. National Artist Napoleon V. Abueva is the guest of honor. The Biennial Project is an artist collective initiated by eight prominent contemporary artists from Singapore. Since 1998, the group has mounted collaborative exhibitions with artists from Malaysia and Indonesia.

Featured artists are: Ahmad Abu Bakar, Datuk Anthi, Mohamad Sabri Hadi Sulaiman, Mohamad Yadzi Abdul Karim, Mohamad Razali Mahat, Saleh Japar, Siti Amanda Hermawi and Sukasmi Sukiar. Joining them are Philippine artists Gene Santos, Pardo de Leon, Jacquiee Ceriz, Maria Cristina Salabao, Eugene Quinsay, and Jaclyn Sta. Ana. Call 929-1017 or 929-2630.

'Intimation' at National Museum

THE NATIONAL Museum invites the public to view the exhibition "Intimation: Contemporary of Still in Philippine Art" at the 4/F of Museum of the Filipino People, along Finance Road, Manila.

The exhibition probes how the concept of still is interpreted in culture and translates into such notions as identity, nationalism and patrimony. It mingles an eleven such as those of José Hidal, Juan Luna, Victorio Edades and José Joya with cultural material like botanical specimens named after places, archaeological artifacts and a diorama of features.

The project seeks to redefine the history of Philippine art in the context of a broader overseas culture, which the previous exhibition "Indios: Transgressions in Philippine Identities" has sought to initiate.

"Indios" and "Intimation" have parts of a series of initiatives that clarifies the role of the collection in Philippine art history and prepares the public for the opening of National Art Gallery.

The exhibition can be viewed Wednesday-Sunday, 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m., until Feb. 20.

LIFESTYLE

(FROM LEFT) Alejandro Reyes, Nick Joaquin and F. Sionil José

2005 NATIONAL ARTS MONTH

National Artists' works dramatized on radio

SOMETIME before National Artist for Literature Nick Joaquin passed away in April 2004, he was resolute that finally, after years of exchanging mere smiles with his "mananaritan," they now had something to talk about: a Joaquin masterpiece had been put into drama and serialized over DZRH-AM which she had heard the night before.

Joaquin's work, together with those of two other National Artists for Literature, F. Sionil José and Dr. Alejandro Roces, will be featured into Filipino and popularized through drama, reliving those masterworks for the masses through Radyo Balitaan.

The special month-long presentation is in observance of the National Arts Month 2005 this February, spearheaded by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA). Theme of the celebration is "Crafting Identities for Social Transformation" as this year's theme.

Radyo Balitaan-ista, first organized in 1941 from the award-winning TV series, a program created, directed and hosted by NCCA executive director and presidential assistant on cultural Cecil Gutiérrez Alvarez, together with its commercial-turned-broadcast Rosario Cunanan.

"These beautiful masterpieces of our acclaimed artists must not be left to scholars and literature enthusiasts. They are only diverse nor distinct Philippine culture and tradition as a people but also impart important lessons and moral values. We must break them down to mediums easily understood by the masses," Alvarez said.

All throughout February, Radyo Balitaan-ista features Nick Joaquin's "Carmen" broadcast of his novel Prayer and Franklin Swartz, radio adaptation by Leonor Aniñel; F. Sionil José's "Rabow Tree," initially staged by Pres. Joaquin, by Rody Vera, radio adaptation by Leonor Aniñel; Dr. Alejandro Reyes' "Rizalista" and Wig "MSO" in indoor and Dupont" (translated by Prof. Isidro Hopoco, radio adaptation by Isagani Entertainment.

On the last week of February, prize-winning plays in NCCA one-act playwriting contest, "Tinipalak Teatro Bahaman," will be featured in Radio Balitaan-ista, selected by Cable News Network (CNN) as an outstanding drama serial for social change, with an introduction/link American actor Jean Rocks.

"We seek to reach drama stories with Jaime Ongpin officials but found on reality charity- ing and detailing guilt and corruption. The soap opera series will highlight good examples of true public service that have been rewarded and hailed as a patriotic symbol, while showcasing examples of corruption that have been punished," Alvarez said.

Alvarez will lead the cast of the radio drama, together with Lily Gamboa Obusan, Ben Medina, Jenny Holmes, Bryan Homerillo, Elaine Cruz Catolos, Fernando Josef, Lea Amores, Jun Legaspi, Phil Cruz, Art de Guzman, Nelly Widel, Joe Lad Santos, Ben Dejesus, Mike Perez, Bernie Ramos, Nina Ruiblero and Hayden Alvarez.

Radyo Balitaan-ista is aired daily over 468 station DZRH, Monday to Friday from 9:30-10 p.m., and on Sunday, from 9:15-10 p.m., with the support of the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation and Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office.

Free arts workshops

THE NATIONAL Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) will hold Artshop 2005 during the whole of February.

The workshops on basic creative movements in dance for children between 7-10 years old will be held every Tuesday (Feb. 8, 15 and 22), 3-5 p.m., while the workshops on basic theater lessons for participants between 12-15 years will be held every Thursday (Feb. 10, 17 and 24), 3-5 p.m.

Story writing workshops for young adults, ages 13-20 years old, will be held every Monday and Tuesday (Feb. 7, 8, 14, 15 only), 5-8 p.m., while the workshop on choir singing for children, 10-15 years old, will be conducted every Saturday (Feb. 12, 19, 26), 8 a.m.-12 p.m.

Workshops on painting will be given on Feb. 14, 3-6 p.m. and is open to participants ages 13-16.

Weekend workshops on Feb. 12 and 13, 19 and 20, 26 and 27 (Saturday, 9-5 p.m., Sunday, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.) include the workshops on playing an ensemble of different stringed instruments like bandura, octavina, piano, guitar with contra-bass and classical for children ages 10-15 years old, and workshops on basic martial arts technique for participants ages 6 years old and above.

All workshops are free and will be held at the NCCA Building, 633 Gen. Luna St., Intramuros, Manila. Call Irma Hernandez at 527-2192 local 303 or log on to www.ncca.gov.ph.

Graft-prone DPWH destroying Bohol heritage

DESPITE the protected status of St. Martin Basilica in Tagbilaran (Tubarges) by the National Historical Institute, an unauthorized adoration chapel was built in one of the church courtyards that NHI now demands to be demolished.

From page C1

where garden-poses out the bridge on a glaring DPWH blunder.

Last year, DPWH did it again. They started on constructing a highway over a section of the ...ayonal, well-preserved stone bridges along the provincial road originally built during the Spanish colonial period. They consulted the community before finalizing the highway design, but ignored all suggestions to save the bridges.

Regardless of the fact that five heritage bridges of the quality found in Bohol remain in the country, DPWH emphatically stated once again that the community stand to protect the bridges stood in the way of progress.

Progress? I cannot imagine anyone in this country to be anti-progress.

The question to ask is, What good is progress at the cost of eliminating Filipino cultural identity?

NCCA and IHI intervened, but DPWH refused highway rerouting to save the bridges. A more compromise was realized to construct inter-flyovers over the stone bridges, which saved them from destruction but removed them from public view by effectively burying them in concrete.

The Bucharan threat shows that DPWH will not give up. How it insists on running a coastal highway through the center of the town that wipes out a row of heritage houses before it skirts the foot of historic Basilgrato Church.

Imagine vehicular vibrations hovering up the fragile stones of the structure. DPWH accuses heritage vigilantes in Bucharan of being "anti-progress."

In its rush to turn Bohol to concrete, DPWH and eventually elevated entertainment and lounge in Bohol, one of the few provinces in the country that has carefully built upon its own resources and culture to become a top tourist destination.

DPWH will wipe out heritage towns to give Bohol guest roads, so in the end where will the roads lead to? What is the progress there?

Vigilante response

The response to last week's call for Filipinos to be more watchful of our patrimony has elicited reports from heritage vigilantes all over the country who are actively participating in the preservation of our culture.

Among the letters received, one stands out. A young graduate, who has just completed a Spanish government study grant, writes of her stay in Spain: "I assured people from all over the world to know my country and feel discover it. I assured them to know where I came from because my country is my identity."

She continues, "...this trip is long over, yet what it taught [me] will remain. I continue to want for it but opportunity to help in preserving Philippine culture. I also want people ... not to make the same mistake I made. I don't want them to travel abroad and know the country without Filipino pride. I want them to know the importance of being proud and happy to be a Filipino."

No to resto

The most violent reaction came from heritage vigilantes opposing the construction of a restaurant on top of Iligan Malaguindang Bridge, built out of stone during the Spanish colonial era.

The respondents' consensus was to build a restaurant a respectable distance that provided a view of the heritage bridge, but all concurred that absolutely no construction of any sort on top of the bridge should be allowed. They warned of the bridge protected from structural damage, deterioration, and the threat of fire from cooking equipment.

Many readers remember that the case filed by the Heritage Conservation Society against homeowner administrator Dominador Porter Jr. for a similar offense, construction of restaurant buildings on top of the brownstone walls, has reached the Supreme Court.

Tual Church

The Basilica of Saint Martin of Tours in Tual (Batangas) is one of the most majestic churches in the country. Designated as a National Shrine, any alterations to the structure must be approved by the NHI.

Last year, no alterations despite was necessary, all in one of the church courtyards despite NHI suggestions that the construction threatened the fragile structures of Tual Church. The NHI recommendation that the chapel be installed in one of the empty rooms in the convention Tual convent was also ignored. Construction proceeded.

The NHI board thereby asked the church administration to demolish all construction but the latter disregarded the order. This is clearly in violation of the NHI mandate that gives it jurisdiction over Tual Church.

Reports from Tual say that the parish priest requires parishioners who attend Mass in the church to sign a petition against the demolition of the chapel.

The controversy with the Tual parish priest is typical in the Philippines, where the church officials in this time are not attentive to calls from those protect heritage. Many priests are blind to the fact that churches are an important part of Philippine patrimony.

Therefore priests are custodians of these churches on behalf of the Filipino people, who have every right to demand protection of their church heritage. It is certainly an honor for a priest to be a custodian of his flock.

Lessons from vigilantes

These responses show that there is now an increasing interest to learn value to study Philippine heritage, and that many are committed to ensuring that our heritage will survive to our grave so that we will still have something to hand down to future generations.

Another lesson is that protective legislation is no assurance to preserving heritage. Many government agencies, church authorities, and private individuals peculiarly choose to disregard the laws and ram their own agendas through.

As an example of disregarding heritage laws, remember the controversy over the Lapulapu statue erected in Ilihi Park. The wisdom bypassed the NHI ruling that only monuments to Rizal could be constructed in the park that bears his name. How has this issue been resolved?

My own lesson is that the responsibility of our generation to safeguard heritage is the point of being able to deliver whatever remains of it to our children, and it is now up to them to take preservation to the next level. And with the interest of the youth in heritage these days, it might be in better hands in the future than it is now.

We still need heritage vigilantes to blow the whistle. Or else we would have any heritage left for our children, to keep your eyes open.

Remember that the best corner is the Museumsia and Sites Committee of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, info@ncca.gov.ph, fax 527-2098. They will either act on your concern or forward your concern to the right party.

E-mail your feedback to ajtikkun@yahoo.com

ANOTHER old Bucharan house in danger of the DPWH's wrecking crew

Black hearts at play

By Sitee Cada

A the end of "Laro," Rhy Quiniao and Miguel Cuenco's intermidiary new play co-written love among urban gay men, 10 actors stepping in what must be the longest, most emotionally engaging scene in Philippine theater ever.

It's not particularly explicit, if by that is meant the amount of skin bared onstage. Staging decision rules a bathrobe to carefully choreographed blushing and unconvincing, offscreen lighting and masturbatory strobe to suggest the heights (or lows) of homosexual ejaculation.

At the end of the debauchery, the actors untangle themselves one by one and spread out across the stage. You would think there'd look blissful after the lusty fun they've been, but there is an eye in their faces. Only exhaustion.

They search for hungry eyes in the audience and, in fact, Olivia voices, my own and even "Tara," "Dina," until the blood-red lights fade out.

Call it an invitation to hell.

The 10 characters are players locked in a torrid cycle of deception, desperate games, each one more high-stakes than the last, every one a warped offspring of the human need to conquer and find some semblance of affection or any price, it seems—in a world gone cold.

Risk material

"Laro's" structure—it's more looking stories, each episode focusing two actors, one of whom moves on to become half of the next fractured pair—is based on Arthur Schnitzler's 1900 play "Der Reigen" (more popularly known as "La Ronde").

Set in fin-de-siecle Vienna, the play is a bleak narrative wonder: five lost Graces (for Hope and Faith, of 10 prototypical individuals of that period—Prostitute, Soldier, Count, etc. The material has always been provocative for its stark view of love as a petty game, full of myths of postmodern human behavior.

In Schnitzler's view (also contained in "Eyes Wide Shut," Stanley Kubrick's adaptation of Schnitzler's novel "Traumnovelle"), the awards for love and emotional security can often boil down squalid passageways where violence, abuse, power and brutality become the end of human company and the reason to of their transactions.

All that bloodletting can only result in bloodless facsimiles of love, and, in Schnitzler's universe, it does with horrifying precision.

That suitability has always resonated in works set in macro-ally abundant eras with pervasive social graves dull and flaccid (Choderlos de Laclos' "Les Liaisons Dangereuses" for pre-Bastille France; Eric Rohmer's Les Nuits Blanches for Toronto, or Bret Easton Ellis' "Less Than Zero" and David Fisher's "Thirty Sixty" for Reagan-era America).

But in "Laro," Quiniao and Cuenco's concept is to situate that decadent exercise in present-day Manila, to its small but robust, culls complex gay society where, for all its outlaw urban freedoms, tribal passions still reign and the

NEIL Ryan Sese in Theater Mine's "Laro," directed by Rhy Quiniao

The lines have the ring of unforgiving certainty to them, giving "Laro" tremendous power

MARICES Rodrigo and Rolando Inocencio

terrain of kindred connections often feels like a battlefield.

The conceit works, chiefly because the playwrights have apparently pushed their inhibitions elsewhere to come up with dialogue that's remarkable for its clarity as for its candid, if bitter, truth.

Strong suit

The writers' familiarity with the milieu is the play's strongest suit. The lines have the ring of unforgiving certainty to them, and the result, directed by Quiniao, acquires tremendous power from that honesty.

The audience may find itself wincing more than once at the brutal portraits drawn up in "Laro." The dialogue that opens the play between a policeman and a call boy, ends up in no more genteel act of violence. That gesture repeats itself in ever more painful games as the cop moves on to a manic-ender performance, the transvestite moves up and the boy-for-hire moves on to the next call with an anxious kid, and so on.

Along the way, "Laro" becomes a bracing meditation on identity, longing and mystery, as the characters acquire new dealings to outwit their own selves. The brutish cop hones to the cross-dresser, the latter call boy learns of feeling love, an aging philanthropist tussles all notions of it, and an "ideal" gay couple turns out to be a set of lovers.

These characters are stereotypes, yet by the end of the play they have undergone wondrous transformations. They remain desperate creatures, but some new power exists in their cold company has rendered them more vulnerable, more recognizable human.

Brave cast

This kind of quicksilver evolution (each vignette lasts for only about 15 minutes) is difficult without the right cast, but fortunately "Laro" is populated with talented actors who brazenly go over the cliff with the material.

The standout episodes, between the gay couple and his lesbian young lover, is played by Cicero Linnell and Jonas Jose. There, the playwrights' obvious experiences with upper-middle-class, privileged boys with all their cash issues, control conflicts, buttocks and Ikea furniture produces a hilariously crisp satire of gay bourgeoisie. Cicero Linnell dominates an awesome six-set through this segment with a bravura performance.

Peter Serrano is excellent as the cross-dresser, and he is great. It's aided by his character's natty one-liners. At the other end of the spectrum is Neil Ryan Sese, who brings total ease to his portrayal of an actor, man/underwear model who finds with the jaded philanthropist (Rolando Inocencio).

The dialogue between this pair is the play's most philosophical, reaching as it does on the unending of physical luxury and the limits of self-satisfaction in someone rich enough to buy everything he wants. But that moment is brought down to earth by a searingly comical, profanity twist.

The call boy, whose desire for simple affection makes him the play's "conscience," if you will, is played by Lloyd Velasco. Bravado calls dabbling the Marcus Madrigal. Instead is a break with the face of a chastisey, and that combination makes him an ideal choice for the role.

John Ubaldo Santos, Julius Matabuena, Rom Estrada and Richard Bajuyo round up the strong cast. We have no idea who's straight and who's gay among them, but all together, and without the slightest variety of doubt or inhibition, they're never losing "Laro" to overkills life.

When they utter, "Tara, tena," at the end of the play, think of it not only as a consistency prediction but as a wish for shattered and real, real jobs on a polish finish to a work of theater that glistens darkly like a black pearl.

"Laro" will have a repeat run Feb. 11-19 at Republic of Malate Café (09057813 or 5901555).

E-mail the author at cada@inquirer.com.ph

Exhibit on the sacred and the profane at CCP

THE EXHIBIT "dog god," the opening group show of the Young Thomasian Artists Circle (Tract), will open on Feb. 10, 6 p.m., at the imposing Juan Luna, metropolitan of the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

The exhibit is UST's contribution to the 2005 National Arts Month. It's an expanded version of the inaugural exhibit of Tract which opened on Jan. 10 for the University of Santo Tomas Museum of Arts and Sciences. Curated by UST Museum director and UST secretary-general Fr. Isidro Abano, O.P., and, Prof. Jocelyn Tullao, the exhibit focuses on the sacred and the profane, with the artists drawing on their stylistic, social, spiritual and psychological resources.

Participating are award-winning young artists, some of them faculty members of the UST College of Fine Arts and Design: Wesley Sidernach, Jaime Avon Pacena II, Andrew Bautista, Yuri Benito, C.J. Tiotuico, Lawrence Borrero, Landslee, Mark Magsumbol, and Dante Calabazas.

To be launched during the opening is a catalogue to the exhibit with critical notes by art de Jose Teruel Ruiz.

MARK Magkasakit's "Descent"

JAIME Pacena's "Glossary"

LAWRENCE Borrero's "Reciprocating Wall"

Alliance Française features Nena Saguil

IN celebration of the National Arts Month, Alliance Française de Manille proudly pays tribute to Nena Lacuesta Saguil, now remembered as a remarkable female figure during the early post-World War II era.

Saguil lived a humble and productive three decades in the comparative art environment of Paris. Known to have been married to an art, she passionately continued painting until the late years of her life. Her workshop and home in the city of lights is now a protected cultural heritage, and a popular stop for tourists and artists.

Making her exhibition, the French cultural center shall be presenting a rare experience for lovers of art. The Alliance Total Gallery presents a black exhibit entitled, "The Paris Years: 1954-1964," displaying some of Nena Saguil's paintings which are now in the possession of a number of art collectors and the Ateneo de Gallery.

Masterpieces such as "The Island" (1955), "Paris at Night" (1956), and "Alcoholism" (1958) are included in an impressive list of artworks to be installed for public viewing.

"The Paris Years: 1954-1964" opens today at the Alliance Total Gallery, 209 Nicanor Garcia Street, Bel Air II, Makati City. Cocktails at 6:30 p.m. Open to the public. Exhibit runs until Feb. 25.

Call 8927581/8927946, or visit the website: www.alliance.ph.

Arts Month activities in Cavite

DE LA Salle University-Dasmari-nas joins the celebration of the National Arts Month this February through several activities with the theme "Young Robinsons in DLSU-D."

At Museo De La Salle, the language and literature department is holding a performative reading of Emily Bronte's novel in English while the Cavite Young Writers Association will do a dramatic reading of prose and poetry of Cavite writers from the Revolution up to the present.

Among the exhibits are Henri de Pilipino student publications, multimedia presentations of selected Cavite-based visual artists and works of DLSU-D students and employees. Important cultural and historical sites in Cavite are featured on film or video by the communication arts department.

The Cavite Studies Center will launch Bonete: a Cavite Word, which will increase the collection of unique lexicons of the Cavite Word Bank. It will also hold the Kapihan sa Alitaptap Batalo Agninaldo forum on Cavite arts.

In the last week, the Student Affairs Office will showcase Cavite songs, dances and traditions in the Tinghalang Aslan Bayan. There will be performances by the DLSU Chorale, Filipinescas Dance Group, Aurora Poetry Circle, Teatro La Salyano and La Salle Repertoire Singers.

NCCA Deputy Executive Director Emilio Y. Tiongco will be the guest speaker at the closing ceremonies.

Call 6447650.

Poet Cirilo Bautista in science forum

TOP POET Cirilo Bautista will deliver the lecture "Intertwining Science and Literature" on Feb. 10, 9 a.m., at Fr. Blas Hall of De La University of Santo Tomas Main Building.

The lecture is in connection with Science Week 2005 organized by the UST College of Science led by Dean Pacita Juinio-Sevilla III.

It is open to the public.

Growing up in the company of artists

A young girl finds it her luck to grow with top artists Malang, Cris Cruz and James Onglepho

By Charissa Onglepho
Contributor

AT THE ARIA Art Gallery at the Art Plaza of Shangri-La Plaza, artist James Onglepho, subsets my grandfather, is holding "The Birthday Exhibit" with his fellow artists, Malang and Cris Cruz. The show is a chance for me to see my grandpa, who has always been an inspiration to me, and his artist friends in a new light.

My grandpa and his friends have been holding the exhibit since 2003 as a tribute to their late friend, National Artist Vicente Hernando. This year, the show is different.

My grandpa said that, first, the artworks in the last two shows were done in color. This year, they used only black and white to bring out the differences and the uniqueness of the images. Second, black and white is very basic for a painter. An exhibition of black-and-white drawings is quite challenging to an artist; it is rare in the current art scene. Third, black-and-white drawings can bring about different effects from those done in color.

Mr. Malang said his current series on women includes how much he still enjoys art making, particularly using his favorite medium of choice, charcoal.

Mr. Cruz, his best pare, said he was learning so much after going back to the basics and working alongside Mr. Malang and my grandpa, both of whom he respects so much.

I missed the opening of the show last Jan. 21 because of classes. But the following day, my grandpa took me again to the Aria Art Gallery to see the drawings personally. I was excited.

Even I was young, I have always seen the paintings of Mr. Malang at the gallery. Of all his great paintings, I love his "Harbor and Child" series the most. Sometimes, he simply focuses on the mother's eyes, which express the feelings of the mother, and the impact of a mother's love on a child. The

JAMES Onglepho, Germaine Onglepho, Malang, Charissa and Cris Cruz

face, the hair, and the clothes show the real, kind, simple, humble, and very loving Filipina.

Mr. Cruz's artwork is very exactly its watercolor. The flowers are realistic, and his colors are very romantic.

Every Saturday afternoon from 1998 until 2002, the Saturday Group of Artists, which Mr. Cruz heads, held their painting and drawing sessions at the Aria Art Gallery. I was always tagging along with my grandpa then, and I would always see Mr. Cruz busily appreciate his artworks.

Family of artists

I grew up in a family of artists. Since I was born, I have lived with my grandparents. My grandpa and grandma have been taking good care of me for the last 15 years. Because of their great love for me, they gave me their master bedroom, which was complete with all the amenities I could ever ask for.

Since I was a kid, every time I didn't have classes, I was always in my grandpa's studio, watching how he painted. Tomorrows, I would start sketching his face. At the age of three, I started learning how to draw and to love art. My grandpa has actually kept all of my works.

By the time I was in high school, I started to love writing. I now write poems, essays and short stories. My accent: I know and my sister, Germaine, appreciate all my writings.

Family members seldom go to my grandpa's studio, except me. I have seen my grandpa paint from the beginning, how he paints from the first coating, the second coating, and until he puts on the finishing touches. Grandpa often says:

"When I was younger, I saw Rembrandt his series of "Lotus and Landscapes," and recently, "Shading Flowers." These subjects are very oriental to nature.

By the time my grandpa starts to paint, he is relaxed. He is not stressed, and simply enjoys what he is doing. Maybe it is because his feelings influences his paintings with an aura that instills inner happiness.

For this year's "Birthday Exhibit," grandpa's ink drawings feature fishing villages, a subject matter that he is doing for the first time. I have seen him draw without using any references. He uses only his memory, imagination and feelings. Little by little, his creative flow begins.

Grandpa told me that he saw these fishing villages for the first time in 1988, when he went to Zamboanga preparing for his first one-man exhibit. He went always with his friends, aboard a small boat and touring the small islands near Zamboanga City. He sometimes stayed there for a few weeks.

The sketches he made back then might have been lost, but the memories of the scenes he saw are still intact.

For the black-and-white drawings, grandpa used ink on rice paper, a excellent made in Japan. The quality is not the same as that of Chinese rice paper, but it is just as durable.

My grandpa's black-and-white drawings are different from his oil paintings. I like them, but in my mind, if one day he would paint the fishing village in oil, I think they would be in a unique scales.

THE AUTHOR

International music camp holds concert at CCP

THE FIRST Asia-Europe Music Camp will end tomorrow, Feb. 8, with a grand concert at 7:30 p.m. at the Little Theater of the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

To be played are original compositions that were finalized in the music camp such as "Two Silhouettes," by Dave Yu of China, "Dancing Delusions" by Nilo Alcala of the Philippines, "Feast" by Gonzalo Lourenco of Portugal, "Six Bones" by Annette Goh of Singapore, and "Binalig," Pinasuyo pa," and "Hokhoyni Itoy Oma-la" by Bob Arm of the Philippines.

The camp has been going on since last week at the Ateneland Arts Center in Mt. Makiling, Laguna. It brings together young instrumentalists and composers from Belgium, China, Cyprus, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, South Korea, Lithuania, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Singapore, Spain and Thailand.

Call 832-1125 local 1404, 1405.